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PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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To
MY MOTHER AND FATHER
with gratitude
for their love and loyalty

PREFACE

A type of life, or a way of living, which we commonly speak of as "human" entails moral problems. Reflecting on such problems is a moral philosophy. When "moral philosophy" is defined this way, it is clear that all of us have engaged in moral philosophizing. Yet, very few of us have persisted in this type of reflecting, and for this reason, have not achieved a thoroughly thought-out analysis of such problems.

This book endeavors to extend the range of our reflecting about these problems; and in doing so, it endeavors to point out how perplexing any moral problem is which may at first appear to be "simple." Thinking about any of these problems is engaging in the same type of reflecting as constitutes the most celebrated of moral philosophies. Most of our thinking, however, most of the time is restricted to too few of them; and so our reflecting on them is too limited to constitute a *clear* awareness of their actual complexity.

We may, for example, know what we mean by a type of acting which we speak of as "conduct"; but we do not likewise know which specific acting fits the description that constitutes our definition of "conduct." We may define "conduct" as "that acting for which responsibility is rightly assigned," but ascertaining which acting is correctly so regarded is extremely difficult. We are, for instance, aware of the extensive tests which must be performed by trained psychologists and psychiatrists to ascertain whether or not individuals are "responsible" for their acting. When any individual, for example, is regarded as "insane," he is absolved from "responsibility" for his acting; and in being so absolved, his acting is not regarded as "conduct." "Conduct" is a term used for classifying acting for which moral accountability is believed to be "rightly" or correctly assigned. Whether or not it is correctly assigned, is, of course, an *empirical* problem, and not merely a matter of defining the terms "conduct" or "responsibility." That is, it cannot be known that an individual's acting is correctly classified as "conduct" until it is also known that he is "responsible" for his acting; and ascertaining this is often very difficult.

Courts of law are concerned with the *actual* capacities of individuals to control themselves, and with the *actual* capacities of individuals to select between alternatives when they are confronted with alternative ways of acting. Courts of law are not perplexed about *defining* "conduct," but about *applying* a definition of it. An individual, for example, who is driven by a compulsion to set fires is ordinarily given a sentence which is very different from another individual who sets fires for some "malicious" purpose. A pyromaniac's behavior is seldom even classified as "malicious," although it is anti-social, since the term "malicious" is ordinarily used to classify a type of acting over which an individual is believed to have control. Thus a competent use of this commonly used term presupposes information which can be ascertained only by empirical investigations.

Defining "conduct" as "behavior subject to voluntary control" is a language-procedure. Ascertaining, on the other hand, which behavior is so described, is an empirical procedure which in no way is confined to language-usage. An individual who is "rightly" regarded as being responsible for his behavior is one who *is* capable of anticipating the consequences of his acting; and anyone who is not capable of anticipating the probable consequences of his acting is not morally accountable for such consequences, because not sufficiently intelligent to be aware of what is probably entailed in his acting. A capacity, therefore, to "foresee consequences" is an empirical criterion on the basis of which acting is classified as "conduct," and on the basis of which moral responsibility is assigned.

It is commonly maintained that an individual who is capable of anticipating consequences of his acting is "rightly" held accountable for his acting. Yet, ascertaining the extent of such consequences for which he is accountable is exceedingly difficult. No reflective person considers it "right" that an individual be held accountable for consequences which he cannot "reasonably" anticipate; and yet, what constitutes "reasonableness" in this case is a problem of what actually *can* be anticipated by a so-called "reasonable" individual.

There is no difficulty in *defining* the expression, "responsible acting"; but there is very great difficulty in ascertaining the correctness, or the "rightness," of classifying particular acts as "morally responsible." In classifying an act as "morally responsible," it is assumed that an individual is able to control his acting; and in assuming this, it is presupposed that an individual is capable of conduct, and therefore is rightly treated as a "person." Yet, as we pass from one morally meaningful term to another in saying this, we cannot help but recognize that what we *say* is no sounder than our presuppositions that the acts about which we speak are actually described by the definitions of the words which we use in speaking about such acts. Whether any acts are so described is, of course, an empirical problem, since it confronts us with the task of finding out whether what we *say* about human life is factually informed, and so interprets human life, or whether it is merely talking, signifying nothing.

Serious reflecting about moral distinctions includes a consideration of the nature of the context in which men act. If, for instance, it actually were the case that there is no sound basis whatever for making predictions about future events, there then would be no *empirical* justification for holding individuals accountable for their acting. There would be no such justification because no person could foresee the consequences of his acting. Thus before we can be reasonably confident about the soundness of our classifications about moral distinctions, we must assume the soundness of an interpretation of "reality." For instance, only as we believe that there is a reality which is foreseeable can we sensibly speak about foreseeable consequences of acting. It would even be "morally" wrong to believe that consequences can be foreseen, if it is the case that they cannot be foreseen; and maintaining that they can be foreseen is assuming that a certain *theory* about reality is sound.

Another assumption which is basic to our common vocabulary of morally meaningful terms is that there are alternative opportunities for acting, since if every act were determined by antecedents over which a person had no control, there would be no basis *in reality* for moral responsibility. A person could not sensibly be held accountable for selecting between alternatives if there were no *real* alternatives. If the way an individual acts were the only way he could act, because it is the only way open to him, then all talk about moral responsibility would again be "sound signifying nothing"—nothing except our conventions about which we reflect in our moral philosophies.

If "determinism" were an empirically informed interpretation of the nature of the context in which men act, there would be no sound basis for any moral philosophy which presupposes that there are real alternatives from which men can select, since only as there are *real* alternatives in the contexts in which men live, can men "rightly" be held "responsible" for what they do. All acting is conditioned or "determined" by some factors, but the problem in competent reflecting on human life is ascertaining the nature of such "determining." If environmental factors completely determine men's acting, so that every instance of their acting is determined by antecedents over which they themselves have no control, then there would be no such thing as *real* alternatives; and there would be no such thing as an opportunity to choose. If, however, there are no such alternatives, there likewise is no *empirical* justification for talking about "moral" responsibility.

Reflecting on problems of this type is an "empirical" moral philosophy; and any person who thinks about any such problems engages in moral philosophizing of an "empirical" nature.

This book is looked upon by its author as an empirical moral philosophy in the form of a conversation with others who also are interested in thinking about moral problems. Hence the repeated reference to "we." This use of the collective "we" is the author's acknowledgment that he is a participant with the reader in this philosophical analysis of moral problems in attempting to formulate principles of a moral philosophy.

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B. K.

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PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF AN EMPIRICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *A moral philosophy confronts us with semantic problems*

Distinctions about which we reflect in a moral philosophy are part and parcel of our everyday discourse. Whatever differences there may be in the language we use for stating philosophies, and for carrying on our everyday non-philosophical discourse, is a matter of degree. It is a matter primarily of the care with which we clarify the terms we use. Any discussion about moral distinctions may become a critical philosophy when special care is taken to state the meanings with which a vocabulary is used; and apart from such a semantic consideration, no philosophy is critical.

One fact with which we are confronted in stating a philosophy is that we must use a language. This, of course, is a trivial affirmation, since stating a philosophy is using a language. But what is not an equally trivial fact is that the language we often use in stating a philosophy is not suited for such a purpose until it is clarified. Clarifying a language as a condition for making it suitable for a philosophical vocabulary is not merely an adjunct to a critical philosophy: it is a type of reflecting which is an indispensable condition for formulating a *critical* philosophy.

The term "moral," for example, which we use in speaking about "a moral philosophy" is anything but clear. We speak about "a moral act" as one which is worthy of approval. Yet, when we speak about "a moral philosophy," we do not assume that we commit ourselves to approving it. In classifying a philosophy as "moral," we think of its subject matter, and not of its worthiness to be believed or approved. When, on the other hand, we evaluate the *worth* of a moral philosophy, we speak about it as "morally sound," or as "morally unsound." We may even speak about it as a "moral" moral philosophy, or as an "immoral" moral philosophy. In so speaking, we thus evaluate the moral worth of a moral philosophy; whereas in classifying a philosophy as "moral," in distinction to a philosophy about religion, or a philosophy about science, we in no way commit ourselves to such an evaluation.

In pointing out that when we classify a philosophy as "moral," we do not presume to evaluate its worth, we clarify the meaning of the term "moral" for purposes of classifying a type of philosophy. And in maintaining that we do not refer to the character of a person when we classify him as a "moral philosopher," we likewise clarify the meaning of the term "moral" as we use it for classifying a person who reflects about distinctions in human life. All who reflect about such distinctions are called "moral philosophers"; and they are commonly so referred to without any implicit evaluation of their worthiness to our respect for what they are, in distinction to what they think. We need not, therefore, apologize for an apparent redundancy in speaking about a "moral" moral philosopher.

The terms which we use for speaking about morally significant distinctions are not clear apart from a special effort to clarify them. Although "ought," for example, is a critical term in moral philosophies, it is, nevertheless, as ambiguous as is the term "moral." In a well-known study, for instance, Hollingworth found that the word "ought" is used in our everyday discourse with a great number of meanings.[1] Subjects were asked to state what the term "ought" means *for them.* In computing the results of this experiment, it was found that this term is used with such a vast range of meanings that not less than ten categories are required just to classify the *types* of meanings with which it is used. Its meaning for some is confined to an aesthetic requirement. For them, the term "ought" refers to a requirement regarded as essential to beauty. For others, its meaning is almost entirely a logical consideration. For them, "ought" refers to what should be inferred from a given statement. Still others think of the term "ought" as referring to what contributes to safety. For them, every device which reduces accidents in industry, or on the highways, for instance, "should" be used; and every rule which can contribute to safety "ought" to be enforced. One need not continue this analysis in order to stress the point that meanings of the most essential terms in formulating a moral philosophy cannot be taken for granted. A person for whom "ought" means "a requirement of law," obviously considers aspects of human life which another would not consider who thinks of the term "ought" as meaning "a requirement of custom or convention." And a person who thinks of the term "ought" as referring to "a requirement of safety," would not take account of what another person would consider essential to a moral philosophy for whom "ought" is a consideration entirely of "social welfare."

2. *A moral philosophy also confronts us with problems other than semantic*

Considering the meanings of the terms "moral" and "ought" is a semantic procedure. Yet, when we ask what we *know* when we use these terms, we are confronted with problems which are not merely semantic. When we ask, "How shall we *know* what is good?," or "How shall we *know* what we ought to prefer?," we raise two fundamental problems, each of which confronts us with distinctly different philosophical tasks. One is semantic. The other is epistemological. An epistemological problem, however, entails the semantic problem of clarifying the meaning of the term "knowledge." Since *knowing* what "ought" to be respected is a basic moral problem, a moral philosophy cannot adequately be formulated without first clarifying the meaning of the term "knowledge."

Socrates, for example, devoted his life to clarifying the meanings of morally significant terms such as "courage," "justice," "temperance," and "friendship." In so doing, he sought "knowledge." Yet, what some present-day philosophers mean by the knowledge which Socrates sought is not what is meant in this book by such knowledge. Professor

Tsanoff, for instance, maintains that "by knowledge Socrates did not mean learning or information, but life-directing conviction."[2] In reading the Platonic Dialogues, however, one becomes aware that Socrates was concerned with the *right* of a person to have a conviction; and by "knowledge," consequently, he did not mean a "life-directing *conviction.*" He meant rather enlightenment about a way of living of which a person *should* take account when he has a conviction. There is certainly no doubt that Euthyphro, for example, in the dialogue by the same name, was a person of very strong convictions. Yet, Socrates confronted him with the problem of examining the bases for his convictions. Euthyphro was convinced that he should prosecute his father for the death of a servant; and he was convinced that it was the "will of the gods" that he should bring his father to trial. Merely asking Euthyphro, however, "The will of which of the gods?," called into question the right of Euthyphro to act upon his conviction that it was the will of gods. The purpose of this dialogue, therefore, is pointing out how incompetent a person's convictions may be in prompting him to do what is "right," or what morally "ought" to be done. A consideration of what ought to be done, in distinction to what a person of strong conviction *thinks* he ought to do, constitutes this particular dialogue. We need only read this ancient document in order to become aware of a profound problem in morally serious reflecting, not only on what ought to be done in *acting;* but also on what ought to be done in *understanding* how the term "ought" is used in discussing moral obligations.

Ambiguity often persists in our discussions about morally significant distinctions, notwithstanding our efforts to clarify our language. The fact that basic differences persist in philosophical vocabularies, notwithstanding philosophers' efforts to clarify them, could not be more apparent than in contrasting the vocabulary which Moritz Schlick uses with the vocabulary which Socrates uses. Schlick declares that the affirmation, "'I ought to do something,' never means anything but 'Someone wants me to do it.'" "And in fact," he continues, "the desire of another, directed upon me, is described as an ought only when that person is able to add pressure to his desire and thus to reward fulfillment and to punish neglect."[3] Everything, however, which Schlick regards as constituting the common meaning of "ought," as a morally significant term, is rejected by Socrates as outside the scope of moral significance. Socrates maintains that what is morally significant for a person can be ascertained only by eliminating every consideration from his acting except what he respects as an "ought"; and he clarifies what he means by uniquely moral considerations by citing the myth of the ring of Gyges.[4] According to this myth, the ring of Gyges makes its wearer invisible; and so anyone who wears the ring could do anything he desires without ever being detected, and so without either being reprimanded or punished. An individual who hesitates to cheat and to steal because he fears the consequences of being apprehended, would, according to Socrates, desist from cheating and stealing for a motive which is outside the scope of strictly *moral* considerations. According to Socrates, the scope of moral determinants of moral acting is what is esteemed as an ought—as what *should* be done because it is *worthy* of being done.

No two philosophers, therefore, could be farther apart than Schlick and Socrates. These two philosophers do not, however, differ in semantic method; since each is perfectly clear about what he means by the term "ought." Yet, both use this term in radically different ways, because each refers to a different aspect of human life as morally significant. Anyone who believes there is an aspect of human life of which Socrates speaks, dismisses Schlick's analysis as unsatisfactory; although not on semantic grounds, since Schlick's philosophy is a splendid example of a scrupulous respect for semantic considerations. One knows exactly what Schlick means when he uses the word "ought"; but if one believes that Schlick ignores an aspect of life which is essential in order to understand what is *morally* significant, then he rejects Schlick's analysis for *empirical* reasons. He rejects it because Schlick does not take account of data which are essential for formulating a philosophy about the moral possibilities of human life.

Many philosophies, in fact, would be unintelligible to

Schlick for empirical reasons. Schlick, for instance, would not understand what some philosophers *mean* when they define moral value as what "ought to be." And he would not understand such a definition, not because he is handicapped by language, but because he does not take account of an aspect of human life which these philosophers regard as essential for formulating a moral philosophy. Schlick, however, regards his philosophy as "empirical" because he assumes that the only meaning which "ought" has in the experiences of men is an awareness of constraint against their wills. Yet, it is the non-empirical character of his view which Professor Garnett criticizes in pointing out that "The moral consciousness of mankind . . . is almost unanimous that the sense of obligation makes its demands quite independently of personal interest and social pressure and often directly counter to them." [5] If Professor Garnett's view is an accurate estimate of an aspect of human life—and its accuracy is defended in this book—then Schlick's so-called "*empirical* moral philosophy" is a misnomer.

3. *Empirical studies of human life can be clarified by a moral philosophy*

One aspect of morally serious living is affirming ideals. Another aspect of it is doing what a person can do to ascertain their soundness. A moral philosophy should, therefore, take account of these two distinguishable aspects of morally serious living. It should take account of objectives affirmed as ideals, and also of the effects of such ideals upon human life. This latter aspect is a matter for empirical investigation, and consequently comes within the province of the empirical sciences.

The dependence of a sound moral philosophy upon psychology and sociology, for instance, is no less evident than is their dependence upon some moral philosophy. Although a psychologist may endeavor to ascertain the effects of ideals upon human life, he must have some clear notion of which aspect of human life is correlated with a particular ideal. The very assumption that some ideals are causally related to *undesirable* aspects of human life entails, furthermore, some notion about what is "undesirable." A psychologist, however, cannot ascertain the detrimental effect of particular ideals without having some concept of what is detrimental; and this, in turn, presupposes some idea of a moral norm.

Although a philosopher may well confront specialists in various sciences with a reminder of what is a moral ideal, he himself is not always competent to specify *how* this ideal is most effectively achieved. He may, for example, remind parents and educators that children who are capable of benefiting from instruction should be given such instruction; but he certainly is not qualified to suggest the age at which such instruction is most effectively given. The notion that a child should be given opportunities to develop all the capabilities of which he is capable is a moral ideal. Yet, the specific means which are most effective for realizing this ideal can be known only by empirical investigations. A moral philosopher, therefore, who is qualified to reflect about an ideal of children's education, and about parents' responsibilities for it, must take account of much which cannot be known merely by reflecting on such an ideal. A moral philosopher would, in fact, make a pathetic figure of himself if he assumed that he could deduce from his ideal of parents' responsibilities for children's education information which actually can be learned only as a result of the most extensive of investigations conducted by great numbers of educators and psychologists.

After we think about all that must be considered if any moral ideal actually is to be given content sufficiently to make it a useful directive, we see how little is known, for example, when we are told that a parent is morally responsible for his children's education. The ideal as such is empirically vacuous, since it is actually significant for a parent only to the extent that a parent understands what such responsibility entails. Just what is entailed in being a morally responsible parent, however, can be learned only by consulting those who know what must be done in order to fulfill such responsibility. Anyone, therefore, who is able to take advantage of all that is now known about the correlation between learning and physical factors would be morally negligent if he did not take advantage of such knowledge; and the same must be said about whatever can be known by means of scientific investigations which would enable a morally serious person to know what specifically to do that is capable of making a beneficial difference in the quality of human life.

In maintaining this, one does not also maintain that specialists in the various sciences should displace moral philosophers. It is obvious that we can recognize the "moral" significance of the knowledge of scientists only after we have reflected about what constitutes "moral" significance; and this is the special consideration of moral philosophers.

A moral philosophy is justifiably classified as "empirical" only when it takes account of all that can be learned from empirical sciences which investigate aspects of human life. Its methods of inquiry into the nature of human life thus take account of information learned by means of scientific investigations; and only with such knowledge are the reflections of philosophers sufficiently informed to be competent appraisals of the moral possibilities of human life.

4. *The moral value of a moral philosophy constitutes an empirical problem*

We morally evaluate a philosophy when we think about the help it gives us in clarifying some of our problems; and this practical basis on which we evaluate a philosophy is itself a moral criterion. We are interested in its capacity to help us achieve the type of life which will most justify our living. If any philosophy clarifies this problem, we want to consider it; and we want to learn from it all that we can about the values which are most worthy of our respect. Hence we are not interested in philosophies which, although logically consistent, are, nevertheless, expansions of unsound points of view. We want to know which philosophy actually is a well-thought-out and consistent analysis of a scheme of living which can help us to enter into an abundant life; and when we are seriously concerned with the moral potentialities of human life, an abundant life is the only type of life we want, either for ourselves, or for others.

The worth of a moral philosophy as a *moral* philosophy is its contribution to an understanding of the moral possibilities of human life; and thus the basis for the worth of a moral philosophy is itself an empirical criterion. It is, in fact, the type of criterion of which Plato speaks when he declares: "There is a specific excellence of everything for which a specific work or function is appointed."[6] Any philosophy may be of *some* help in clarifying *some* problems with which a person is confronted; but a philosophy which takes account of all aspects of life to which serious attention must be given for attaining the greatest possible enrichment of living is better as a moral philosophy than one which takes account only of one such aspect. Pleasure, for instance, is one aspect of a morally rich human life; and a moral philosophy, such as hedonism, which considers this aspect in detail has some value. Since pleasure is only one aspect of life, or only one element in human life, hedonism is too restricted in its scope to qualify as a very helpful type of moral philosophy about the *total* nature of human life. Its help is confined to too limited an area to be as effective as it must be for a person who wants a clarification of "human life," and not only one very restricted aspect of it.

When we think about a moral philosophy as "helpful," we think about it as helping us to achieve the quality of life which we look upon as most worth achieving. We cannot consider the moral value of a moral philosophy, therefore, without also considering the problem of value, since morally serious reflecting is a consideration of value, and specifically of those values which are capable of contributing to the enrichment of human life. We want to know which moral philosophy is helpful in thinking through the conditions which will enable us to achieve the richest possible life of which we and others are capable. In considering a moral philosophy for its moral helpfulness, we thus are not interested merely in what some philosopher thinks. We are interested rather in what significance his thinking has for helping us clarify the problems with which we too are confronted. Thus we are interested in his philosophy as a moral philosophy when we consider it for what it can contribute to the clarification of problems with which we, as morally serious persons, are confronted. It is this indirect approach to understanding life itself which is the moral role we require of a moral philosophy.

The moral criterion we all use in reflecting about any recommended scheme of living is its practical worth. We ask: "Does it actually contribute to the type of living which will enable us to achieve the quality of life that we esteem as most worth having in comparison with other qualities of which we are also capable?" We are all capable of many qualities of life; but one of our most urgent moral problems is ascertaining which of all of these qualities of life is really worth what we must do in order to achieve it.

A moral philosophy is *morally* valuable if it helps us to understand the scope of possible goods which we can achieve by means of serious effort. When we consider a moral philosophy for its moral help, we think of it in terms of fulfilling this specifically moral function of enlightening us about the richest possible type of life of which we are capable. Such a life is a moral norm; and a philosophy provides a moral service for us if it helps us to understand the conditions entailed in such a norm.

We want a philosophy which takes account of facts that ought to be considered in a competent interpretation of the moral possibilities of human life; and we want to be the kind of persons who are capable of honesty in interpreting what life is, and what life can be. In order to be so qualified, we must take account of all that actually can be known about what affects the quality of human life, and about what can be done to enhance its quality by making it as fully "human" as possible. Ascertaining what this is, is itself a moral problem; and reflecting about it, is a moral philosophy.

CHAPTER II

THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF A MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *We are constantly confronted with moral problems*

Whatever affects the quality of human life, either for its enrichment or its impoverishment, either for its benefit or its handicap, is a subject of morally serious reflecting; and anyone who is concerned with the fact that human life is so affected, is interested in moral problems. The fact that men use their capacities and resources for living so differently, and thereby develop different qualities of life, is something about which every morally serious person thinks. It was about this particular fact, for instance, which Confucius thought when he observed that "At birth men's natures are much the same, but as a result of their habits, men become widely different."

No one is confronted with a moral problem unless he thinks; and so the easiest way to remove the possibility for being confronted with such a problem, is not to think. Although one's life will always be affected by many things, if one does not think about his life as being so affected, he will never be aware of moral problems. It is only when we think about anything in terms of its effects upon the quality of life—our own as well as others—that we engage in morally serious reflecting.

Whatever has an effect upon the quality of life is morally significant. This, in fact, is a definition of "morally significant." In defining "morally significant" as anything which affects the quality of life, one includes in the scope of moral considerations, whatever affects life, either beneficially or detrimentally. Just what constitute such benefits and detriments are particular moral problems in which we are interested only because we are interested in the basic moral fact that the quality of life is affected in one way or another by any number of factors.

What has moral significance is obviously not confined to what men *deliberately* do to make a difference in the quality of life. Hence a distinction must be made between "moral significance" and "moral responsibility." Moral responsibility is one aspect of moral significance: it is that aspect of human life for which men may be praised or blamed. Just what comes within this aspect of life, however, is itself a profound problem; and, as a matter of fact, ascertaining what is appropriately praised and rightly blamed constitutes one of our gravest moral problems. Even the very meaning of "appropriate" as here used in speaking about "appropriate praise," confronts us with a specific moral problem.

Whatever we consider as having an influence upon human life is a moral problem for us. There are, of course, many things that influence the quality of life of which we are not aware, and so we may not say that moral significance is confined to those things of which we are aware. Whether or not anyone is aware of the relation between diet and the quality of life, for example, makes no difference whatever in the fact that there is such a relation. In becoming aware of this relation, however, a person takes account of one aspect of moral significance. Ascertaining which foods are beneficial, and which are not, is one problem; but prior to this particular scientific problem is the moral problem of specifying what is meant by "beneficial" and "detrimental."

Insofar as a standard of living is affected by the economy of a country, such an economy is another specific moral problem. Insofar as homes are affected by the worry of parents about the decreasing value of savings, due to the increasing inflation of money, inflation of money is a moral problem; and insofar as anyone can do anything about it, it is a moral responsibility. Thus when an expert in finance declares, "It would be stopped if . . . people should insist on it," he assigns responsibility for a problem having moral significance.[1] The fact that something can be done to arrest inflation is morally significant; and it confronts men with moral responsibility. If it is the case, as this expert declares, that inflation in this country "will not be stopped if the trend toward the 'welfare state' continues," then all that is done to support such a tendency comes within the scope of moral responsibility for the present inflation.

By ignoring any threat to human well-being, a person does not remove the threat. He merely ignores it as a problem with which he might do something if he were alert enough to take account of it. Almost innumerable problems could become moral issues if people were concerned enough with them to raise them to the dimensions of *moral* problems.

2. *We are perplexed about what is morally right*

Everyone who tries to live as he believes is right is faced with moral problems which often are so perplexing that he does not see how they can be resolved. No general rule can readily be offered for resolving such perplexities, since ascertaining which general rule applies to a particular moral problem is itself a moral problem.

The responsibility of an intelligent person for being aware of perplexing problems is not the same responsibility as offering solutions for them, although an awareness of moral problems may well be prior to any intelligent suggestion about what to do to resolve them. Many problems with which we are confronted are not easily resolved even into issues of right and wrong. They confront us rather with the bewildering problem of ascertaining not only what is right, but also *if* there is a right which is capable of being distinguished in such confusing situations. Many of the bewildering situations we face are not issues between right and wrong, but are problems of *clarifying* the meaning of right in complex situations. In many situations we do not even know what is right; and so we can hardly do what we regard as right before we are able to ascertain what we can respect as right. And ascertaining what we are morally entitled to respect as right is a grave problem.

A person is confronted in many situations with a necessity to choose between alternatives, each of which may be beneficial for someone; yet, he is forced to make a choice in which a benefit for one entails a denial of a benefit for another. In situations such as this, a person is not faced with clear-cut alternatives of right and wrong, good and bad, but with the problem of ascertaining, insofar as he is able, who has the moral right to precede the other in order of consideration.

A morally serious person wants to do what is right; yet, notwithstanding such a desire, he often does not know which way of acting is right. A relatively simple dilemma of this sort is considered in the first book of the *Republic.*[2] An individual entrusts his property to another for safekeeping, who keeps the trust in good faith, and wants to do all he can for the welfare of the one who trusts him with his property. Then the one who owns the property asks for its return at a time when, as Socrates says, "he is not in his right mind." This problem is not legal, since there is no question about ownership. Socrates says: "What the man deposited" is his, and so "is due to him." But he also points out, it is "due to him *in a sense,*" and the sense in which it is *legally* due to him is not the problem. The problem is moral. It is what *is* right for a person to do when he agrees to do all he can to help another who entrusts his property with him. One question he must consider is whether or not he has a moral right to refuse to return to the other his own property. But another question is whether or not he has a right to let the other have his property when he is not even capable of using it for his own welfare.

This is not an uncommon type of dilemma. Every parent who wants to do what is beneficial for his children is faced with a problem either of acquiescing to their wishes or of refusing to grant them, on the ground that by doing so, his children will be harmed. Granted that parents want to do what is beneficial for their children, parents, nevertheless, are faced with the fact that denying children what they want, is, from the children's point of view, not an act of parents' love, but of parents' unkindness. Dilemmas such as this are not fabricated in theory. They are problems in life; and every person is confronted by such dilemmas insofar as he considers his responsibility for making choices in complex situations—and most situations in life about which we seriously reflect, are complex.

Our life is filled with such occasions for reflecting, because it is crowded with situations in which we are aware of alternatives, many of which are conflicting claims of moral priority. We are able to reconcile some of them. Others we cannot. The ones we cannot reconcile are components in the bewildering moral dilemmas we face. What makes them so disturbing is that we are aware that more than one claim has *some* right; and so more than one claim might well be respected. Yet, in some situations which we confront, it is not possible to respect more than one. The Book of Ruth gives us a moving account of such a situation. Naomi believed that her daughter-in-law should, after the death of her husband, return to "her mother's house"; although she was also aware of Ruth's affection for her. To be aware of the profundity of his moral conflict, a person need only read the words of Ruth: "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die, will I die, and there will I be buried."

The conflict with which Naomi was faced in allowing Ruth to remain loyal to her, rather than in returning to her own people and remarrying, was suspended at least for a time, since we are told that when Naomi "saw that (Ruth) was determined to go with her, she said no more." [3] The story, however, does not end with the older woman's acquiescing to the younger woman's wish. It also includes an account of what Naomi did to bring about the remarriage of Ruth; and it is this aspect of the Biblical story which reveals the profoundest aspect of love. Wiser by years, Naomi was aware of a moral right which the younger woman had to give her love to her own children after her remarriage. This story of the devotion of Ruth to Naomi is only partially understood, therefore, when one selects the loyalty of Ruth to Naomi as its primary lesson. The profounder devotion is the manifestation of the wisdom of

Naomi in doing what she believed would contribute to the enrichment of the life of Ruth.

A comparable dilemma is basic to the decision of Socrates as recorded in the *Crito*. In the last hours of his life, Socrates was aware of a dilemma in accepting the decree of the court which commanded him to drink the hemlock. In acquiescing to the judgment of the court—unjust as it was—Socrates would leave his children. Hence Crito appealed to him to escape from prison by ways which his friends had arranged. For Socrates, however, the proposed escape was violating the laws; and for him, an ordered state, which is made possible by respecting the laws, is the only type of state in which he wanted his children to live. The *Crito*, therefore, is a searching document of a moral struggle between alternative ways in which a father can show his love for his children. One way was clearly stated by Crito. It was for Socrates to leave prison; and in so saving his life, he could continue to help his children. The cost, however, of acting on this alternative was breaking the law; and in so doing, it was, according to Socrates, helping to create the very type of state in which he did not want his children to live. Motivated in part by love for his children, Socrates decided to accept the sentence of death; and by so doing, he denied his children a guidance which he might have given to them had he lived. Yet, in so acting, he did what was within his control to help preserve for his children a state in which he believed it would be worth living.

It is entirely beside the point whether or not one agrees with the decision of Socrates. The fact is that in the last hours of his life, Socrates was faced with a conflict such as few people have to face. It was a conflict between loving his children in one way, or loving them in another; and he chose to love them in a way which entailed giving up his life so that they might live in a state whose order would be possible only if everyone respected its laws, and did not presume to interpret them in ways which would justify every individual to claim his own rights prior to the rights of all others.

Every person is in some way faced with dilemmas which obviously are not so extreme as the one faced by Socrates. Yet, insofar as one is appealed to by dozens of causes, he is faced with a comparable problem of ascertaining what is morally entitled to receive his loyalty. This is not a problem of persuading people to be loyal. It is a more disturbing problem of clarifying the moral right of causes to receive a person's loyalty. Many people are willing to be loyal to a cause; but they are faced with a problem of ascertaining the right of a cause to receive their loyalty. This constitutes a far profounder moral problem than merely creating in people the willingness to be loyal. It is in light of this fact, therefore, that Royce's famous definition of loyalty as "The willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause," glosses over a moral aspect of loyalty.[4] One moral problem is becoming loyal to something; but a far profounder problem is becoming loyal to a cause which has the moral right to one's loyalty, because it is a way in which human welfare is achieved.

Defining loyalty, as Royce does, is simple; but ascertaining which causes are morally entitled to one's loyalty, is not simple. It is this difficult problem which confronts everyone who is willing to be loyal to a cause, and earnestly wants to know which of all the thousands of already existing causes are morally entitled to his support.

It is misunderstanding human life to assume that the basic moral problem is *creating* in people the willingness to be loyal. The fact that there are organizations which men loyally support is evidence that there is no widespread indifference to causes which appeal for loyal support. Yet, the moral problem is *ascertaining* which of these causes to which men are already loyal are worthy of their loyalty. When one thinks of the suicide squadrons of the Japanese, he certainly cannot doubt that supreme loyalty was a fact among thousands of young Japanese. So likewise, when one recalls the sacrifice of thousands of American soldiers in fighting against the Japanese, he cannot doubt that loyalty is a fact; and he cannot doubt that men have a capacity for loyalty. The moral problem is not *creating* this capacity. It is *directing* it.

3. *We must reflect as a practical necessity*

Insofar as anyone wants to be benefited by his acting, rather than handicapped by it, he is faced with a necessity to do what he can to secure benefits and to avoid handicaps. One way of doing this is reflecting about the justification for choosing one possible way of acting in preference to another. Ascertaining which possible way of acting is more beneficial than another, or which gives indication of being so, is a moral problem. It is also a moral challenge. In fact, every moral problem is a challenge to use one's capacities to reflect for the purpose of clarifying acting.

A morally earnest person is faced with a never-ending responsibility to question the rightness of what men believe is right. What men believe is right is always dated. It is an expression both of the amount of reflecting which men have done, and also of the amount of knowledge which they have of what actually is beneficial for life. Thus the standards themselves by which men pass judgments of moral rightness may not be exempt from critical reflecting; and subjecting such standards to scrutiny is one of the moral responsibilities of all who are capable of reflecting. All who have both intelligence and training to ascertain what is beneficial for life, also have a moral obligation to do what they can to alter any accepted practice when it is not suitable for directing men into the richest possible life of which they are capable.

The achievement of the richest possible life of which men are capable is an objective criterion. It is not merely a matter of what is thought at any particular time. The criterion according to which morally serious individuals endeavor to live is what *is* possible for the enrichment of life, and not only what is *thought* to be possible. What is thought to be possible for the enrichment of life is something which must constantly be scrutinized in order to correct any mistaken beliefs men may have about what actually can be achieved for the enrichment of life. As Professor Tsanoff says, "The standard by which we judge the principle on which we act must (itself) be vindicated by constant criticism."[5]

A person who is capable of reflecting is also morally responsible for scrutinizing his preferences, as well as the principles on the basis of which he justifies his preferences. Everyone has preferences, and everyone acts in ways to achieve what he prefers; but when a person reflects about his acting, he becomes aware that having preferences confronts him with a moral problem of examining them for their soundness. The intensity of preferences is no moral criterion for their soundness. It is a biological criterion. The moral criterion by which preferences must be scrutinized is their contribution to the enrichment of human life, and this is not a matter merely of achieving what is most wanted at a particular time. A person who wants to do what is right is concerned with the moral *rightness* of his preferences. A morally serious person, therefore, is not concerned primarily with finding arguments for defending what he does, or prefers to do. He wants most of all to be enlightened about what is *right* to do, and so is *right* to prefer doing.

A capacity to reflect upon what it is right to do is not possessed by all who are morally conscientious, since a person may be morally conscientious, and not *reflect* upon the moral rightness of what he regards as right. A person, in other words, may act consistently with what he regards as his conscience, without also being conscientious in reflecting upon the moral rightness of his conscience. Having moral scruples, therefore, is more common than scrutinizing one's scruples. Yet, a person who is morally earnest in doing what is right—and not merely in continuing to do what he thinks is right—is faced with the obligation of subjecting his own conscience, or his own accepted moral standards, to scrutiny.

A person who is earnest about what is right, and so is earnest in trying to ascertain what he ought to do, is not interested in justifying what he does. He wants to understand what he should do that is right; and this is desiring knowledge of a moral criterion.

A morally earnest person reflects about what is right in order that he may have a sound principle by which to live; and so a morally earnest person imposes upon himself an obligation to reflect in order to know which principle, or pattern of living, is entitled to esteem as a moral criterion. What a morally serious person esteems as right, he also regards as morally entitled to be obligatory upon others; and what he believes is entitled to the respect of others, he believes is entitled to his own respect. If a person cannot believe this of a principle, or pattern of acting, then he does not seriously believe that it is a criterion of right acting.

Every person who has seriously thought about what is right has made some attempt to clarify a principle of right. What he has accomplished in so doing may not compare too favorably with what has been accomplished by well-known philosophers, but he has at least gone in the same direction in which well-known philosophers have gone. They have gone further in the same direction for the reason that they have spent more time and hard work in thinking through some of these problems than most others have either done, or are willing to do. But anyone who is earnest in trying to ascertain what is right, is engaged in serious reflecting, which if continued, would have features in common with the ablest of moral philosophies.

Insofar as some reflecting is effective for clarifying problems, there is no apparent basis for doubting the practical worth of more thinking. One might, however, hesitate to infer that because some thinking clarifies some problems, spending one's entire time in sustained thinking would result in clarifying all of one's problems. But it might be justifiable to believe that if one were to think more persistently about more problems than he already does, he would also be clearer than he often is about what is worth doing.

4. *We need a moral philosophy*

One step in knowing oneself is reflecting about the nature of one's wants or desires; and knowing oneself to the extent of becoming clear about what one wants is achieving a morally important clarification of life. Only as a person becomes clear about what he wants will he be able to *think* about the worth of attaining what he wants. Such morally helpful reflecting includes an evaluation of the worth of having what is entailed in fulfilling particular wants or desires.

Everyone must think through this aspect of his life for himself. No one can do it for him. This does not, however, imply that a person cannot benefit from another person's reflecting. It merely means that every person must himself *think through* what it is that *he* wants when he is clear about all that is entailed in having what he wants. In thinking about what is entailed in fulfilling a particular type of desire, a person takes account of consequences of acting before they occur. It is this type of thinking which enables a person to avert at least some unfavorable consequences which might otherwise accrue to acting.

Conduct is reflected-upon behavior; and it is such behavior with which moral philosophy is concerned, in distinction to types of behavior which are studied, for instance, in laboratory experiments with animals. A justification for a moral philosophy, in distinction to a scientific biology or psychology, rests solely upon the soundness of the distinction between conduct, and behavior which is not conduct. Although it may often be difficult to ascertain which behavior is appropriately classified as "conduct," the difficulty is not brought about by any reflecting which is peculiar to moral philosophy. It is brought about rather by our common practice of assigning moral responsibility for some behaviors, and not for others.

Most of the distinctions about which we reflect in moral philosophies are made in our everyday practice. Yet, we are often confronted by disturbing aspects of such distinctions; and in attempting to clarify them, we reflect until we develop a philosophy.

We are often impatient with philosophies, and often tend to look upon them as *purely* theoretical. What is "theoretical," however, in a moral philosophy, in distinction to what is "practical," is not easily determined. But the difficulty in determining this is not peculiar to moral philosophy. It is one of the difficulties we face even in distinguishing "pure science" from "applied science." We need only think about the common disparagement of "pure" science in order to know that what is classified as "pure science" one year becomes the basis for a new applied science in a subsequent year.

It is difficult, or perhaps impossible, at a particular time to ascertain which reflecting is without any "practical" significance, and which would be significant if one were to incorporate it into his practice. The fact that many people do not take advantage of reflecting is no commentary on reflecting, or on philosophy. Whether particular moral philosophies are beneficial in practice may well be a problem, but whether *reflecting* is morally beneficial cannot be a philosophical problem without contradiction. Reflecting about this is itself philosophizing. Even reflecting about the impractical worth of many, or most, moral philosophies, is philosophizing about philosophies; and so long as a person is convinced that his reflecting about the worth of philosophies is justified, he believes in the practical worth of philosophy.

A moral philosophy is no guarantee that a person will have a rich and abundant life, but it is at least one aspect of such a life; and it is included in such a life whenever anyone seriously wants to achieve the richest life he can achieve. Desiring to achieve such a life includes wanting to use one's intellectual capacities as completely as he can for directing his life, and for selecting goods which can be incorporated into an ordered life.

As we grow in character, we grow in mind. The hope of most moral philosophers has been that as we grow in mind, we will also grow in character. This hope for the most part has, unfortunately, not been justified. Yet, *in principle* it may, nevertheless, be sound that if we were to reflect with more honesty, and with more real moral seriousness and integrity, we would also be more consistently benefited by reflecting, and so by a moral philosophy.

5. *We need a philosophy of values*

Selecting from among possible objects of choice on the basis of their presumed significance for life is a moral activity. The occasions for this type of activity, however, are not confined to alternatives between good and bad, or between right and wrong, since many of the choices we make are not between such clearly recognizable properties. They are rather between degrees of comparative value.

Comparing objects on the basis of degrees of value is not thinking about them in terms of a so-called "absolute standard." It is rather thinking about them in terms of a property shared by the objects themselves. Plato, for instance, points out that we think of one instrument as a "better" pruning shears than another in light of the function of pruning. In saying that one pair of shears is "better" than another for performing a particular function, a person thus thinks of two pairs of shears in terms of a type of function which each may perform, but may do so with differing degrees of effectiveness. It is in this type of relation, referred to as "better than," that a person also thinks of the property of "good." An object which has a capacity to contribute beneficially to life is said to be "good," or is said to be "better" than another object in relation to life. An object is thought of as "good" when it is believed to have a capacity for contributing beneficially to life. Just what is the meaning of the term "beneficial" in this case, however, is not an issue here. All that is being stressed is that whatever is thought of as "beneficial" is regarded as having a property on the basis of which it is also said to be "good," or "better" than another thing which is also believed to have this property, but in a lesser degree.

All evaluating is comparing, and there is no comparing without some reference to a property. Yet, the property in terms of which comparisons are made, need not be other than properties of the objects themselves. In affirming, for instance, "This is good," a person may mean no more than that an object has a property which makes it worth selecting in preference to whatever does not have the same property in the same degree. Whatever the property may be in terms of which two or more objects are evaluated is a norm for a particular comparison; but it is not a norm extrinsic to the compared objects. The property in which they are compared is itself the basis for their evaluation.

A property exemplified in varying degrees by several objects is a standard for comparing objects with one another. This type of comparison is certainly not the only type of comparison with which we are familiar, but it is at least one type; and it is safe to say that it is this type of comparison which is most common in our *selecting* activities. When, for example, a person thinks of an article of merchandise as "cheaper than another," he does not think of some "absolute" price. The notion of "absolute price" in this context of comparison is meaningless. The notion of "cheaper than" is clear when only two objects are compared, neither of which is a so-called "absolute" norm. So likewise in comparing one object with another in terms of "better than," we think of one object in relation to another; and it is only our language which makes it appear as if we were comparing objects with some "absolute" norm.

A condition for comparing objects is thinking of one in relation to another, or as *relative* to another. The meaning of the term "relative," unfortunately, is often thought of in terms not of comparison, but in terms of a property of a compared object. It is this confusion which is made in some philosophies that defend the "relativity of value," as well as in others which criticize the notion of relativity of value.

Evaluating is relating one object to another; and it is thinking of such related objects in terms of some property. All comparing is interest in properties; and only as there is such an interest, is there also an interest in an exemplification of such properties. A person, for example, who believes that there are ways in which men can live that are effective for reducing the common tensions and frictions of life, believes that such ways have a moral property which is not possessed by patterns of living which bring about frictions and tensions. The maxim, "A soft answer turns away wrath," expresses a belief about the moral property of one type of acting; and this type of acting is respected as preferable to acting in anger, because it is believed to have a property which acting in anger does not have. "Count ten before you speak in anger" is likewise a recommendation of a specific pattern of acting, because it is believed that such a pattern of acting actually contributes more consistently to human well-being than does the pattern of acting of saying whatever a person is inclined to say during moments of anger. In believing that there are *ways of acting* which are disadvantageous, a person believes that there are *types* of living which are detrimental to human well-being; and in believing this, he has a very specific philosophy of value.

A philosophy of value is simply a thought-out analysis of the nature of the meaning of the terms "value," or "worth," or "significance"; and insofar as anyone reflects on the nature of choices which are "worth" making, he engages in reflecting about the nature of value. A person could not even speak about the "worth" of one type of acting in contrast to another without having some notion about the meaning of the term "worth" or "value"; and clarifying the meaning of the term "value," of which moral value is one type, is specifically a philosophical task.

Insofar as moral philosophy is reflecting about moral values, it must take account not only of ideal objectives, but also of what is believed to be the means for achieving them, although a detailed investigation of these means is not within the province of philosophers, but rather of scientists. In light of this distinction between the role which philosophers may perform, and the role which empirical scientists may perform, it is desirable for a moral philosophy itself to keep these roles distinct. The type of knowledge which is set as the objective of moral philosophy is all that is beneficial for human life. This is an ideal; and its attainment depends upon a knowledge which is gained from various types of investigations. *Clarifying* the roles of empirical science in relation to the moral enrichment of life, however, is a unique function of moral philosophy; and it is an indispensable function in the overall task of doing all that can be done for the moral enrichment of human life.

If a person desires to ascertain which things are worth selecting, he is concerned with a moral criterion for evaluating even the soundness of the criteria themselves which he uses for making moral evaluations. What a person *thinks* is worth selecting, is a value judgment. What *is* worth selecting, on the other hand, is whatever is capable of contributing to the enrichment of human life. Hence what actually *is* capable of contributing to the enrichment of human life is the norm by which a morally serious person wishes he could evaluate his beliefs about moral values. Discovering what conforms to this norm is the practical purpose of morally earnest reflecting: it is ascertaining what has the capacity for enriching human life.

Living according to what one thinks he ought to do is only one aspect of morally serious living. Doing all he can to ascertain the soundness of his thinking about such a presumed obligation is, on the other hand, a much more disturbing aspect of moral life. It is a matter of ascertaining the trustworthiness of moral criteria. A criterion is morally trustworthy only when it is a pattern by which evaluations are enlightened of conditions for achieving an enrichment of life; and such enlightenment is an understanding of what constitutes morally sound choices. What is of primary importance, therefore, to a morally serious person is the *soundness* of what he thinks about moral value. In other words, it is the validity of his judgments about moral value.

Anyone can be aware of a criterion which he uses for evaluating, but his awareness of such a criterion must confront him with a sobering problem. It is the problem of reflecting about the soundness of the criterion which he uses for making his evaluations. If there is one supreme responsibility with which a morally serious person is confronted, it is reflecting about the justification for maintaining a criterion which he uses as the norm of moral value. This problem, in fact, is so disturbing that it is not surprising that it has often been ignored in moral philosophies.

CHAPTER III

THE MORAL VALUE OF A MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *We make moral distinctions before we formulate a moral philosophy*

When we read the story about a Chinese magistrate who threw himself into a river in order to save a city from being flooded, we raise a question whether such an act expresses folly or heroism. The magistrate believed that by sacrificing himself he could save others. Underlying his belief is a primitive notion that a river embodies a spirit, which when offended can be appeased by sacrifice. We might indeed doubt the soundness of this animistic point of view, and yet not be inclined to question the heroic character of this magistrate who, on the basis of a mistaken animistic belief, nevertheless acted out of consideration for the people of a stricken city. Although we do not question his heroism, we do, however, regret that such heroism was combined with such ignorance; and a regret of this type is a moral evaluation, since it expresses a judgment about what we believe need not have been. And indeed, the ignorance in animism need not have been combined with this man's praiseworthy intention to help others.

We make a moral distinction when we are aware of a disparity between an intention to do what is believed to be helpful and what actually is helpful. In regretting that the magistrate gave his life without also achieving what he intended to achieve, we contrast what we believe might have been accomplished by a person who was willing to sacrifice his life, with what we believe actually was accomplished by such sacrifice. In giving his life for what he believed was a way to save his people, the magistrate did indeed enrich the moral heritage of mankind by his worthy intention. Yet, thankful as we may be for this enrichment of the record of morally earnest intention, we, nevertheless, must regret that such intention was expressed as it was.

We have the same type of regret when we read the story of the sacrifice of life which a Chinese girl made for her father. Believing that the voice of a person who is sacrificed in casting a bell enters into the sound of the bell, the girl gave her life to enable her father to cast a bell such as he believed could not be cast without such sacrifice. Although we may be perfectly aware that the animism which underlies this sacrifice is an expression of ignorance, we need not, however, dismiss this sacrifice itself as an act of ignorance. The ignorance which underlies this sacrifice accounts for an expenditure of a human life in a way totally unrelated to an intended achievement, since there is no relation whatever between the sound of a bell and the voice of a person sacrificed in its casting. Much as we disapprove of the ignorance of animism which underlies this particular sacrifice, we cannot, on the other hand, dismiss the sacrifice as if it were equally regrettable. The willingness of the girl to sacrifice her life to enable her father to achieve an objective in his life is a moving document of the human spirit. What, however, is regrettable is the ignorance involved in expressing such a heroic dimension of human life.

We make a moral distinction when we regret one aspect of this act while we approve of another. We all make distinctions of this type. We distinguish between what we regard as worthy of being approved, and what we regard as being regrettable. We make such a distinction, for example, when we read about the sacrifice of life made by three men, who, seeing one of their number accidentally fall into a blazing kiln, jumped in after him. These three men could not have had the slightest notion that by so acting they could save the other from death. In light of this, therefore, we are faced with a problem of evaluating the moral aspect of this act. If the sense of the unity of the group impelled each to suffer the fate of the other, we cannot help recognizing the consistency with which each respected the bond of community. Yet, the moment we think of the children of these men who were left fatherless by this act, we also reflect upon the *moral* justification for their acting.

The very fact that we may be bewildered about which sacrifice of life is worthy of our approval, and which is not, indicates that we do not have a clearly formulated principle on the basis of which we make evaluations about the moral merit of such sacrifice. The fact that we are confronted by cases in which there are elements of self-sacrifice whose justification we question, leads us to question the soundness of interpretations of the principle of sacrifice of life. Many of us affirm the principle: "Greater love has no man than he who gives his life for another." We affirm this because we approve of the *principle* of sacrifice of life, yet we doubt the effectiveness of some sacrifices of life for bringing about the end intended in making such sacrifices. We need not doubt the moral soundness of the principle itself that a person cannot show greater love for another than in giving his life for another. Yet, we have misgivings about the justification for some sacrifices in which the willingness to help others is expressed through a type of acting which is not related to the actual help which is intended; and it is this aspect of sacrifice about which we reflect even before we carry our reflecting to the extent of formulating a moral philosophy.

Insofar as we think about the moral justification for making any sacrifice, we think about the end achieved by such acting; and in thinking about this, we relate sacrifice as a means to the end intended by a person who makes a sacrifice. We regret that a person is ignorant insofar as we believe that he is mistaken in what he believes he can accomplish by sacrificing; and although we regret that a person is mistaken—so far as we can understand—we do not, however, regret that he is willing to sacrifice for an end which he believes is worthy of his sacrifice.

There are at least two considerations of which we must take account when we reflect on any act of sacrifice. One is what a person himself believes he can accomplish by his acting; and the other is what another person believes can be accomplished by such acting. It is this twofold perspective which brings sacrifice within the range of our serious moral reflecting. If we did not have an idea about what is accomplished by an act of sacrifice, in distinction to what is intended by a person who makes a sacrifice, we would never regret the fact of ignorance which often underlies even the supreme sacrifice of life itself.

Insofar as we reflect about the justification for a sacrifice of life which political enemies make, we also question sacrifice of life as a moral principle, since enemies sacrifice life for what they believe justifies such sacrifice. Bewildered as we may be when we reflect about this, we are not equally bewildered about the moral worth of sacrifice. We are bewildered only about which sacrifice is morally justified; and this is the problem of ascertaining which sacrifice actually contributes beneficially to human life. When we evaluate the justification for the sacrifice of a person's life, we evaluate a person's sacrifice as a means for achieving an end which he intends to achieve by his sacrifice. This is not passing judgment upon the integrity of a person's motive, but rather upon his knowledge of the suitability of the means for achieving what he believes can be achieved by his sacrifice. We need not, for instance, doubt the motive of patriots who enlist in the armies of their countries, although we may well doubt the effectiveness of armies for achieving what loyal soldiers believe can be achieved by means of armies.

No one doubts that the security of his country is one of the essential conditions for individual and collective well-being; and yet, he may have the gravest doubts about the effectiveness of military means for achieving it. In this respect, he has the same mixed feelings about men who sacrifice their lives in warfare as he has about the Chinese magistrate who sacrificed his life for what he believed would bring about the well-being of his people. Just which acts of sacrifice are capable of bringing into being the benefit to which men aspire is indeed a problem; and it is one of the soul-searching problems of anyone who sincerely wants to do what will be worthy of his sacrifice. But what anyone *believes* is worthy of his sacrifice may be very different from what *is* worthy of his sacrifice; and if anyone refuses to make this distinction, he denies the very basis for reflecting upon the moral soundness of beliefs. He denies, furthermore, that there is a sound distinction between what *is* effective for bringing about human well-being, and what *is believed to be* effective for doing so.

In making this distinction, we are all confronted with one of the sobering aspects of moral earnestness. Wanting to do what is beneficial for ourselves and for others, we are, nevertheless, faced with the fact that our understanding of how this can be achieved is limited. Our sincerest desire to do what will be beneficial is always confronted with the limitations of what we understand as the means for bringing about such intended benefits.

We always act within the limitations of our knowledge; and so it is within these same limitations that we also sacrifice even to the extent of giving up our lives. We are sobered when we realize that the only person whose sacrifice is capable of being misdirected is the one who actually does sacrifice. An individual who makes no sacrifice will obviously never make a mistake in sacrificing, although he may well make a mistake in losing an opportunity to sacrifice for something which is worthy of his sacrifice.

Although aware of the limits of our knowledge, we may, nevertheless, do all that we can to diminish such limits. We may do all we can to acquire knowledge, and yet be perfectly aware that all achievements in learning are dated. We may do all we can to learn, and still be aware that there is far more to be learned than we will have time to learn. We are faced with time limits. We have a certain length of time in which to enlighten ourselves by using our capacities and resources for learning; and we are not morally responsible for doing more. Yet, in doing all we can, we still will do less than we wish we could do. This is a type of regret which is an inescapable aspect of morally serious living. Even after endeavoring as earnestly as we can to find out what can be known, we are aware that what *we* understand is not the norm to which we aspire. Our knowledge is what we have accomplished. But no sensible person mistakes this as the norm of what *can* be known. In realizing that we are limited in knowledge, we are also aware of a regrettable aspect of life; and as we think about the distinction between the ideal of what *can* be known, or what is knowable, and the fact of what is known, we are aware of a type of dualism which is basic to all moral philosophies.

Every moral philosophy is an analysis of an ideal of what is regarded as a criterion of moral value; and as we reflect upon all that is entailed in such an ideal, we formulate a moral philosophy. Yet before we engage upon this type of reflecting, we are aware of distinctions between what is thought to be beneficial, and what may actually be beneficial. What actually is beneficial is an ideal; and insofar as we are morally earnest, we do what we can to conform to this ideal. We certainly do not presume that in our short lifetime we will fulfill the demands of this ideal; although insofar as we do all we can to achieve what is beneficial, we live according to this ideal. Living according to this ideal, however, is not the same as fulfilling all the obligations which are implied in this ideal.

Doing all a person can to know what actually is beneficial is a responsibility which every morally serious person acknowledges as his own. Although a morally serious person tries to fulfil this obligation, he, nevertheless, is aware that the way he interprets this obligation is limited to his knowledge, and is even limited to his comprehension of the possibilities for increasing his knowledge. No matter how earnest a person may be in trying to make choices as wisely as he is able, he is always faced with the fact that his understanding of what is knowledge is itself limited; and the very fact that there is such an unavoidable limitation, constitutes one of the challenges to a morally serious person. It is the challenge of using all of his capacities for enlightening his life; and to this end, he wants to do all he can to take advantage of all the resources of knowledge which are available to him. Such resources, however, are restricted; and what is more, a person's capacities for comprehending them are even far more restricted than are the available resources of knowledge themselves. Yet, doing all that a person can do to learn is taking his responsibility seriously for enlightening his life; and such enlightening of life is an objective ideal. It is using all of one's capacities for acquiring all he can learn which will effectively inform his choices of ways for achieving the enrichment of life—his own and others.

2. *Reflecting on moral problems is not necessarily a moral philosophy*

One aspect of morally serious reflecting is thinking about possible types of social contexts which will enable men to attain a quality of well-being which is not attained in the type of context in which they already live. Plato's *Republic,* for example, is one expression of reflecting about a type of social organization which is presumed to help all members of a society to become morally just. Plato would have had no serious motive for formulating such an ideal if he had been satisfied with the type of context in which he lived. Dissatisfaction with a social context is an underlying provocation for reflecting about an alternative to such a context; and specifying what such an alternative could be, is a moral philosophy about a social order which is believed to be more contributory to human well-being than the orders in which men already live. Such a contrast between a type of society in which men live, and a type in which it is believed they might live, underlies all serious moral philosophizing. It is a distinction between what has been accomplished, and what is believed to be worth accomplishing.

A moral ideal is usually thought of as a pattern of life which is not yet actualized; but the fact that such a pattern is not actualized, is not essential to the nature of a moral ideal. Any conceivable pattern of life is a moral ideal; and it is "moral" in the sense that it is a conceivable set of conditions for attaining a type of life which is regarded as worth desiring. An idea about a type of life which is *in principle* incapable of being actualized is, on the other hand, not a *moral* ideal. Yet, just which idea of life is incapable of becoming the pattern of actual living is something which cannot be decided entirely within the scope of a moral philosophy.

The realizability of a pattern of life is a matter of the capacities of human life, and is not merely a matter of what can be thought. What can be thought is helpful in conceiving the possibilities for living; but a thinkable possibility is a *moral* ideal only if it can beneficially influence human acting. Clarifying such an ideal is one aspect of moral reflecting; and an extensive part of every moral philosophy is this normative aspect, which actually is the "practical" significance of an ideal.

An ideal which is at variance with what is possible for human life cannot effectively function in practice as a *moral* ideal, and so the empirical basis for denying that a particular ideal is a *moral* ideal is its presumed unrealizability. The actual unrealizability of an ideal, however, is not merely a matter of what may be thought about an ideal. Many men, for example, have thought that the Sermon on the Mount is unrealizable in the type of society in which we live; but the fact that many men think this is not regarded as significant by those who believe that the Sermon on the Mount is realizable *if* men were to make the effort to conform to its requirements. Disparaging an ideal as unrealizable in no way determines *its* nature. It expresses only what is thought about its nature.

Reflecting on ideals is often thought of as "theoretical," in the sense that ideals are thought of as "impractical." Hence a classification of such reflecting as "theoretical," in the sense of having no significance for practice, is merely another way of disparaging particular ideals. An ideal which is looked upon as incapable of being actualized is disparaged as "purely theoretical"; and reflecting about it is likewise so classified. Such a classification, however, is only what is *thought* about ideals. It is not a criterion of their actual moral value, because it may be a misunderstanding of their actual capacities for directing life into a quality which would be an enrichment of life *if* the ideals were to direct "practice."

Anyone who sincerely believes that a particular ideal is capable of directing practice for a beneficial purpose, respects it as a *moral* ideal. What he thinks about the conditions for actualizing it is his theory about life, as well as about that particular ideal. Since a moral ideal is a norm, reflecting about ideals is a *normative* philosophy. There is, in fact, no moral philosophy which is not a consideration of norms; and there likewise is no reflecting about norms which is not "theoretical"—in the sense of considering a pattern of life which is worth respecting, even though it is not respected in practice.

Moral philosophy includes a consideration of practice, and also a consideration of norms according to which practice might be directed for the enrichment of life. What is done both in reflecting on such norms, and in acting according to them, is morality. Morality is an operation upon life in which reflecting is included, and is included because it is believed to be an indispensable condition for an enrichment of life. Morality is one subject matter of philosophy; and a philosophizing about morality, in turn, is an ingredient in one type of morality. This is not circular; and it is not a "paradox." It is simply a fact that some men cannot live the way which they believe is most worth living without also seriously reflecting about life, and without also seriously reflecting about the very worth of reflecting as one condition for living.

No one would reflect upon what is entailed in conforming to an ideal if he did not already have some notion of the significance of such an ideal for practice. Having such a notion about the quality of life which could be achieved by means of respecting an ideal, however, is not a consequence of having a moral philosophy: it is itself the point of view with which a person formulates a moral philosophy.

Even a momentary awareness of what life might be opens up to us some notion of what life might more consistently be. A momentary impulse, for example, to forgive another who has hurt our feelings, opens up to us a glimpse of a quality of life which we might cultivate as a more consistent *type* of life. Such forgiving may be only momentary in comparison with all the hours of life in which we hold grudges; and yet, even though momentary, it opens up to us a possibility for extending this way of living, and for making it a more consistent pattern of our lives.

This very contrast between a momentary quality of experience which enriches life, and the quality of life which is devoid of such enrichment, is a dualism of which every one of us is aware. We could not, for example, even seriously think about the desirability of living without hate unless we had already experienced a quality of life in which, at least momentarily, we were free from hate. One condition for such reflecting is an awareness of a quality of life which we have to some extent already realized, but which we may, nevertheless, be capable of realizing as a more consistent quality of life.

Experiencing a quality of life about which we reflect as a moral ideal is not a result of having a moral philosophy. Rather, we formulate moral philosophies only when we are aware of types of living which we regard as worth more than other types of living. In reflecting upon any quality of experience, we generalize from a particular *type* of acting to a *type* of living, and we think about the quality of life that would be realized if we were to act in this way more consistently. In thinking about the benefit, for example, of "turning the other cheek," rather than of striking back, we reflect upon one moral principle; and we would not seriously reflect upon this principle if there were not some aspect in our own lives which made this principle morally significant for us, since we do not respect principles or ideals as morally significant until we are aware of benefits which they might have in terms of an enriched quality of life.

3. *A moral philosophy must be evaluated for its practical helpfulness*

A moral philosophy must be evaluated by two criteria. One is logical. The other is practical. The first is internal consistency. The second is effectiveness for clarifying problems in practice. Although a philosophy may clarify *concepts,* and so perform a logical role, it need not also be helpful for clarifying the *problems* with which we are faced in making decisions that are effective for the enrichment of life—our own and others.

The criterion, however, of "enrichment of life" is disparaged by Kant as not being of *primary* concern in a moral philosophy, since he maintains that "everything empirical" is excluded from a moral philosophy.[1] According to Kant, a moral philosophy "does not borrow the least thing from the knowledge of man himself."[2] Thus the scope of a moral philosophy, according to Kant, differs radically from what is regarded in this book as the scope of a moral philosophy. In maintaining that a moral philosophy "must be carefully cleared of everything empirical," Kant specifies a purely logical criterion for evaluating the adequacy of a moral philosophy. From the point of view maintained in this book, however, Kant's criterion of a moral philosophy is impoverished of much which is of *primary* importance to a person who seriously reflects upon the nature of life, and so upon the conditions for enriching it.

Kant looks upon a moral philosophy as a logic of moral *concepts,* which he calls a metaphysic. By a metaphysic, he means an analysis of the *concept of the principle* of morality, which, for him, is duty. Since his primary concern is analyzing the *concept* of duty, he does not take account of concrete situations with which men are confronted in doing their particular duties. Taking account of particular duties is, according to Kant, an empirical concern, and is not a part of an analysis of the *principle* of morality. Yet, as has been stressed in this book, a criterion of the moral worth of reflecting, and so of a moral philosophy, is empirical: it is its instrumentality for clarifying problems which are encountered in actual living.

The empirical function of a moral philosophy presupposes an analytical function of clarifying morally significant concepts, although there is no sound reason why a moral philosophy should not also include both of these functions—the analytical and the empirical. Insofar as it includes both, it is more helpful than if it consists only of one. A reflective person, in fact, could not be intellectually satisfied with a moral philosophy which does not include a clarification of critical terms; but he would not be morally in earnest about such a philosophy unless he were also interested in more than a *clarification* of terms.

Kant certainly states a sound procedure for formulating an analytical philosophy when he declares: "We should always carefully separate the empirical from the rational part."[3] This procedure for an analytical philosophy, however, is also compatible with a philosophy which is capable of analyzing *particular* moral problems. Inclinations and desires, for instance, constitute one aspect of human life; and yet, according to Kant, these do not come within the scope of a moral philosophy, since the sole principle of morality, according to Kant, is "acting from duty," and not from inclinations or desires. Desiring an enrichment of life, is, according to Kant, not a *moral* concern, since the one moral concern is "conforming to duty." In order to do this, according to Kant, a person must comprehend the *nature* of duty, which is done by analyzing the meaning of the *concept* of "duty."

"Duty as duty," and not as a means for realizing the enrichment of life, is, according to Kant, the moral criterion. Performing an "action without any inclination to it, but simply from duty," he says, alone has "genuine moral worth."[4] In understanding what is implied in this statement, a person understands Kant's moral philosophy—which is a clarification of the meaning of the term "duty." According to the point of view maintained in this book, on the other hand, the concept of duty as the *sole* moral principle, is impoverished of much of the content of moral life. Yet, according to Kant, the content of moral life is acting out of respect for duty, and so without any consideration for the enrichment of experience, or well-being, or happiness. Kant, in fact, declares that only as a person regards happiness as a duty, is his concern for happiness "moral." A person, says Kant, "should promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and by this would his conduct first acquire true moral worth."[5] Even the desire to contribute to the happiness of another person has "no true moral worth," according to Kant, because it "is on a level with other inclinations." [6] Kant, therefore, maintains that a person should be "beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty."

"Pure duty," it must be emphasized, is a *concept* of duty; and a *concept* of duty is not a type of duty with which men are confronted in the actual situations of living. They are confronted rather with situations in which one duty is often in conflict with another duty.

The principle of "duty as duty," for instance, serves no function in an actual situation in which several individuals are injured in an accident, and the only person who knows of an available ambulance for taking them to a hospital does not also have the authority to drive it. If this person were to use the ambulance to take the injured to a hospital, he would violate the principle of respecting property; and yet, he would do so in making an equipment available to the injured which was intended for the purpose of helping them. Hence, the specific moral problem which confronted this particular person was whether he should stand by while the injured may die, or take the ambulance which he was not legally authorized to drive. This is not a situation fabricated in a theoretical philosophy. It is an actual situation by means of which the value of a moral philosophy itself must be tested.

If a moral philosophy is to become one part of morally serious living, it must be judged for its role both in clarifying actual issues in the concrete contexts in which men *live*, and also for its role in clarifying the vocabulary with which they *speak* about moral issues. Philosophizing about moral issues in situations in which individuals are confronted with actual obligations is indeed a far more perplexing problem than merely *formulating* a moral philosophy. A person might well formulate a philosophy, such as Kant has done; and yet he might have a philosophy which fulfills only the intellectual requirement of consistency. Consistency is indeed one requirement of intelligent life. But it is only one. The enrichment of life includes an intellectual clarification of terms; and it also includes *acting* upon intellectually clarified terms.

4. *A moral philosophy is reflecting about moral principles*

Only as a person has a clear idea of what constitutes moral acting can he justify his selecting of particular acts as instances of moral acting. A person may well select a particular act as a moral example, but he cannot *justify* his selecting of it as a moral example without having a notion of what constitutes a moral property; and a notion of this is a *concept* of a moral principle. Having such a concept obviously is possible only for human life of a certain intellectual level, which Kant refers to as "rational." It is a level of intellectual development in which individuals are capable of "acting according to the conception" of moral principles; and, according to Kant, having such a capacity is having a "moral will." [7] This analysis proposed by Kant is thus a definition both of "moral will" and also of "rational being." A rational being has "the faculty of acting according to the *conception* of . . . principles"; and only such a person, says Kant, has a "moral will." The type of individual to whom Kant refers as "rational" is regarded in this book as the type of person who has a capacity to *formulate a philosophy* about principles of acting, but if moral acting were as delimited as Kant proposes, the scope of morality itself would be very restricted.

Moral philosophy, according to the view of this book, consists of reflecting about the influence of *any* aspect of human life upon the quality of life. A person engages in moral philosophizing, for example, in reflecting about the moral significance of customs which are incorporated into the mores of a culture. No one obviously could engage in this type of reflecting without having some idea of what he means by "moral"; and as he clarifies this concept, he formulates a moral philosophy. In so doing, he clarifies the principles on the basis of which he evaluates the moral worth of customs. Recognizing, for example, that monogamy is an accepted pattern in our culture is recognizing that it is one part of our mores; but in maintaining that it is a moral pattern because it is a part of our mores, is not defending it on the basis of a reflectively scrutinized *principle.* Mores are not regarded as *the* criterion of moral principles by anyone who presumes to judge the moral worth of mores themselves. Insofar as anyone evaluates a socially established pattern of acting in terms of its effects upon the quality of human life, he reflects upon a moral criterion other than accepted custom. The practice in our society of a wife taking her husband's name is also an accepted custom, although no one would care to spend much time defending it as a *morally* significant custom. As a matter of fact, its significance is so lightly thought of by most people, that France enacted this practice into law as recently as the last decade of the last century (February 6, 1893); and England has not even "thought it worth while to give it statutory form."[8]

An individual who regards mores as the criterion of moral value would not, in fact, even reflect upon the moral justification of mores. According to him, what is done is the criterion of what should be done; and in maintaining this, he would thereby dismiss a reflective evaluation of mores as a basic moral problem. Yet, in refusing to question the moral worth of mores, because he regards them as the moral criterion, he engages in some reflecting, even though it is not very extensive, or very profound. In maintaining that mores constitute the criterion of what should be done, he also affirms a moral principle. As Summer points out, people who refuse to question "the goodness or badness of their mores" maintain thereby that their mores are themselves "the standards of good and right."[9] When this point of view is defended, however, a person repudiates not only a moral philosophy, but also reflective living itself.

Refusing to think about what is right is one thing; whereas refusing to think about a criterion which is already accepted as the norm of right is something very different. These two refusals may not differ fundamentally in their moral effect upon life, but they do differ radically in their nature, since one of them is not even within the range of reflecting. In maintaining that mores should not be altered, because they are the criterion of right, a person does reflect.

In fact, his reflecting is in the form of an argument, which may even be looked upon as a form of philosophy; whereas merely conforming to the mores, on the other hand, is not reflecting on mores as a moral criterion.

Being aware of what *is,* is not morally serious reflecting. It is only being informed of fact; and morally serious reflecting is something other than this. It is interest in what *should* become fact. Thus a person engages in serious moral reflecting only as he reflects about what *should be,* in contrast to what *is;* and a person passes moral judgment upon what *is* only as he reflects upon it in light of what he believes could be more beneficial. Such moral judgment so defined would obviously be impossible apart from some reflectively thought-out principle. Thinking about what "could be" which would enrich the quality of life is reflecting about a moral principle; and the earnestness with which a person reflects about such a possible pattern of life is one expression of morally serious living. One of the most eloquent expressions of this type of moral earnestness is affirmed in *The Rubaiyat:*

> Ah Love! could thou and I with Life conspire,
> To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits—*and then*
> *Remould it nearer to the heart's desire!*

Whatever is thought of as "nearer to the heart's desire" is a pattern of living; and as such, is a moral principle. A type of life which is desired is a moral ideal, in contrast to a type of life which is already actual; and carefully thinking about what is more worth having than what a person already has, is clarifying a moral ideal. Whatever a person regards as worth desiring, and so as morally desirable, is looked upon as *possible,* since no person seriously reflects about a pattern of living unless he believes it can be actualized.

A moral ideal performs a practical function in enabling a person to take inventory of what *is* in light of what he believes can be achieved; and so the practical justification for reflecting on moral ideals is clarifying patterns of actual practice. What makes these patterns of acting morally worth desiring can be ascertained, however, only as a person *clarifies a principle* of morality. What he believes constitutes moral worth is the criterion by which he specifies what ought to be done; but what he believes ought to be done is, in turn, always thought of in light of what he believes is already done. This contrast between what is interpreted as actual, and what is believed to be possible, underlies all morally serious reflecting.

If this analysis is defensible, then one must point out a criticism of the particular aspect of Kant's moral philosophy which affirms that in a moral philosophy a person "takes no account of anything that comes under the head of desires and inclinations." [10] The very motive for reflecting about a moral norm or ideal implies that a person is not satisfied with what is actual, but desires an alternative which he believes is more worthy of being approved, because more worth desiring. Yet, in thinking about what is worth desiring more than what is already actual, a person must take account of what already *is*. Practice, or the actual state of affairs, is a datum upon which morally serious reflecting begins; although morally serious reflecting is not confined to it. It would, in fact, run the risk of being fantasy if it did not begin with practice. It would likewise not be *morally* serious if it did not take into account more than practice, or more than has already been achieved.

The dissatisfaction with what is actual motivates a person to reflect upon what constitutes his own moral responsibility. Whatever a person believes he can do to alter the actual, and so make it more contributory to the enrichment of life, is a clarification of his own responsibility. In declaring that "man claims the possession of a will which takes no account of anything that comes under the head of desires and inclinations," Kant affirms a moral ideal—although one must hasten to add that it is a *moral* ideal only if it actually is realizable, or actually specifies a type of life which is attainable. That it is attainable, however, is, in the first place, doubtful; since it is doubtful that a person's life can in no way be influenced or conditioned by "desires and inclinations." But even if such a type of life were achievable, it would, in the second place, be eminently questionable that it would be morally worth desiring. When one thinks of "morally desirable" in terms of the enrichment of life, it is impossible to think of life without desires and inclinations.

The *ideal,* however, which Kant affirms as *moral* obligation is not influenced by desires or inclination; and this ideal as affirmed by Kant is certainly sound. Moral obligation is acting out of consideration for what ought to be done; and desires or inclinations are certainly not capable of comprehending this. Hence Kant's argument is that moral obligation cannot be specified in terms of desires or inclinations, and so must be thought of in terms of a concept, since what an individual may desire, or be inclined to want at any moment of acting, is not the criterion of what is most likely to be informed of all he ought to take account of in acting. Being informed of this, however, is the requirement of an enlightened ideal; and such an ideal is an idea or concept of all that a person ought to do *if* he were to bring into being the type of life which is worthy of enlightened approval.

The pattern of acting which is capable of bringing into being the type of life which is worthy of approval is the norm of moral ideals; and this capacity of an ideal is an objective feature of an ideal. Such a feature is not a matter of what any person thinks about an ideal; but is rather a capacity which an ideal actually has as a pattern according to which men may live. A *pattern of living* is a moral principle; and the moral principle which is capable of bringing human life to its completest possible enrichment is a moral norm by which moral ideals must themselves be evaluated for their moral worth.

Since moral responsibility is doing all that actually will contribute to the enrichment of human life, men's acting must be morally appraised in reference to this norm—which is an objective moral end. In light of this, we must criticize

Kant for maintaining: "The categorical imperative . . . declares an action to be objectively necessary *in itself* without reference to any purpose, i.e. without any other end."[11] Moral imperatives, it must be urged, have "reference" to a purpose other than themselves. Kant himself maintains this when he declares that in conforming to "the categorical imperative," a person acts in a way which will bring into being "the Kingdom of Ends." In maintaining this, Kant certainly does not think of the categorical imperative "without reference to any purpose." He thinks of it rather in reference to a moral end, which is living in a way in which a person becomes a member of "the Kingdom of Ends."

If this analysis is sound, Kant must again be criticized for stressing the derivation of moral concepts or ideals from "reason," without any reference to actual data of life. He maintains: "All moral conceptions have their . . . origin completely *a priori* in the reason."[12] Although it is the case, as Kant maintains, that "they cannot be obtained by abstraction from any empirical . . . knowledge," it, nevertheless, is the case that a moral ideal cannot be formulated without reference to data of actual life. A pattern of acting is a moral principle only if it is capable of specifying what can be done; and so its moral function is in relation to life, and not merely in relation to reasoning. Reasoning is a procedure by which a moral ideal is formulated; but it is not the sole source of an ideal. A person formulates a *moral* ideal only as he reflects upon what human beings can do that would bring about the enrichment of life; and such a derivation of an ideal is not detached from life. It takes account rather of human life as it now *is;* but it takes account of something else as well. It thinks of what is actual in terms of what the actual could be; and such reflecting upon the actual is taking account of "empirical" data.

The moral worth of a principle does not "rest simply on pure reason." It rests rather upon the capacity of "reasonable" men to bring about a type of life which is worthy of being achieved. Whatever is esteemed as "worthy of achievement" is a moral ideal; and such an ideal is not an *observation* of what is done. It is rather a *concept* of what could be done to bring about a type of life which is worth achieving.

Since a normative moral principle is formulated by reflecting upon what is thought to be most worth achieving in life, it obviously is not merely a report of what has been achieved, or already is. In this sense, Kant must be commended for maintaining that "Ideal Conceptions" are not limited to data of which we can make sense reports. Yet, in stressing this, Kant overemphasizes the independence of such reflecting from our common experiences. He says that in formulating "ideal conceptions," reason "transcends everything that the sensibility can give it." [13] We must indeed admit that it does so in the sense of going beyond the scope of sense data, but we must, on the other hand, point out that such reasoning does not go beyond *everything* of which we take account in our sensory reports. No moral ideal arises merely from reflecting, or from reasoning. It arises only in reflectively contrasting what is observed with what is thought to be better, or more contributory to the enrichment of life.

In endeavoring to formulate a principle of morality without reference to any empirical apsect of life, Kant formulates a norm of moral philosophy itself as consisting of *concepts* which in no way take account of any aspect of practice. In maintaining this, however, he states a method for formulating an *analytical philosophy,* rather than for formulating a *moral principle.* It is a procedure for formulating what he calls a "metaphysic of morals," which he defines as "*pure rational knowledge separated from everything empirical.*" [14]

That an achievement of this sort may be classified as a "metaphysic" need in no way be contested; but that such an achievement should be classified as a "metaphysic of morals" must be contested. Whatever has *moral* significance is always in relation to life; and so a "metaphysic of morals" would necessarily be an analysis of the conditions by which the most worthy type of life which one can *conceive* is believed to be actually attainable. In formulating such a moral philosophy, we must think about the actual life we want to improve; and this is always an object of so-called "empirical" knowledge.

The term "morality" is used in this book with a "wide" sense: It refers to whatever is done and can be done for the purpose of enriching life. It is used by Kant, on the other hand, in a much "narrower" sense as acting which is conditioned by "the *conception* of rules" or principles.[15] A *clarification of principles* is, according to Kant, an essential condition for morality itself; and according to him, "It is not with the actions which we see that we are concerned, but with those inward principles of them which we do not see."[16] Although such principles are certainly the primary object of considerations in *formulating a moral philosophy*, they are not, however, the primary concern in morally earnest acting. Acting is morally earnest insofar as it is motivated by a concern for the enrichment of life; and in maintaining this, we consider the enrichment of life as the primary concern in moral acting.

There are times when a person's acting brings about an enrichment of life, either for himself or for others, which he does not specifically intend. Yet, the fact that sometimes actions are beneficial, even though they are not specifically intended to be so, should not bulk so large in moral theory that acting is dismissed as outside the scope of morality, unless it expresses a deliberate attempt to conform to a *principle*. We must certainly take account of a moral principle in clarifying the motive for morally earnest acting; but acting which beneficially affects the quality of human life, and so is included in the scope of morality, need not be conditioned by *respect for a principle*, such as Kant maintains is essential for moral acting.

According to Kant's restricted interpretation, only the most highly developed form of reflective acting qualifies as "moral." His interpretation, therefore, is helpful for clarifying the nature of a moral philosophy about moral principles; but it is not helpful for understanding capacities other than reflecting, which must also be developed in the process of moralizing life. Kant, of course, is not interested in these capacities to which he refers as "empirical" aspects of human life; and yet, from the point of view of this book, the moral worth of a moral philosophy must be evaluated by its contribution to a clarification of such capacities of human life.

It is the specifically rationalistic aspect of Kant's interest in philosophy which accounts for his preoccupation with the so-called "rational" aspect of morality. By "rational" Kant means having the nature of reason, and so having a feature which is not derived from experience. According to Kant, the moral nature of principles consists in their derivation from so-called "pure reason"; and "it is just this purity of their origin that makes them worthy to serve as our supreme practical principle."[17]

As a rationalist, Kant thinks of reason as a capacity which is common to all men; and on the basis of this assumption, it follows that universal principles of morality are thought of as derived from "reason." For a person, however, who is interested in an enrichment of life which is achieved by developing capacities for living which are not only confined to reasoning, this particular rationalistic emphasis is unconvincing, since it maintains that "in proportion as we add anything empirical, we detract from the genuine influence" of moral principles.[18] Anyone who maintains a view which is comparable to the one that is maintained in this book believes, on the other hand, that the very test of the *moral* worth of principles is their capacity to contribute to practice.

Kant, it must be acknowledged, is not interested in the type of morality which is analyzed in this book, since the enriching of experience is, according to him, a concern with practice; and it is not a concern with *principles of practice*—which concern is his *exclusive* interest. We might readily agree with Kant that principles which are morally worthy of respect are not derived entirely from our practice, and insofar as we desire to achieve a type of life which is more worthy of our approval than the one we have already achieved, we want our moral principles to be more than a mere reaffirmation of what we already are. We want principles which will help us to become what we believe is worth becoming—which often is more worthy of our approbation than what we already are. Hence we would all assent to the soundness of Kant's insistence that nothing could "be more fatal to morality than that we should wish to derive it from examples." [19] Deriving principles from examples would indeed reduce the level of moral possibilities to the level of what has been attained; and this certainly is not the only object of interest and desire which morally earnest individuals have. Insofar as anyone is morally earnest about becoming all that he is capable of becoming, he wants to have principles which demand of him more than he has already done. He wants principles which are *worthy* of his respect.

A fundamental problem, therefore, in a moral philosophy is the derivation of our ideas about moral principles; and this problem includes accounting for the origin of ideas about ways of living which we have not already achieved. According to a rationalist, we become aware of such ways of living exclusively by reflecting; whereas the point of view which is maintained in this book is that reflecting is only one means by which we become aware of them. This book maintains that the *content* of moral principles is not derived from reflecting, any more than the contexts themselves are in which such principles are presumed to apply. It maintains that we live in social contexts, and that it is in these same contexts that we become aware of some factors which we recognize as having a moral worth which others do not have.

In becoming aware of a quality of life which we admire, or respect, we ask what makes it such a quality. In so reflecting, we endeavor to ascertain the conditions upon which it can be achieved; and as we reflect about such conditions, we *conceive* principles. In reflecting upon practice, we think of what might be done that would bring about a type of life which is conceivably more "desirable" than the actual practice which we observe; and in having an idea about the type of life which we believe would be richest in terms of significant living, we formulate an ideal. Such an ideal is not derived *from reflecting* on reflecting. It is derived *by reflecting* on life. We reflect on the nature of life as we know it; and also upon the changes which might be made in such a life in order to make it more consistently worthy of our respect. Even the universality of moral principles does not rest upon their derivation from reason, as Kant maintains is the case. It rests rather upon the capacity of patterns of acting to bring into being the type of life which actually is most worthy of approval.

"Worthiness of approval" is not limited to *our* approval. It is rather a feature of what justifies our approval; and no seriously reflective person thinks that such a feature is limited to his own life. He thinks of it rather as a demand upon his life by virtue of the *right* of a way of acting to make such a demand. Its *right* to make such a demand is *its* nature. Thus we may agree with Kant when he maintains that "moral laws ought to hold good for every rational creature," even though we need not also agree that "since moral laws ought to hold good for every rational creature, we must derive them from the general concept of a rational being."[20] This inference does not necessarily follow from the *moral* requirement for the universality of moral principles, even though it is implied in Kant's rationalistic philosophy.

If a person does not begin his reflecting upon the nature of moral principles with a rationalistic premise, he must, of course, offer an explanation other than Kant's for the derivation of moral principles; and one such explanation is offered in this book.

Instances of acting are not the only basis on which generalizations can be made about moral principles even in empirical moral philosophies, although they do fulfill an important function in any reflecting about moral principles. Whatever practices we observe which we believe exemplify principles that we also respect, perform an important role in our reflecting about moral principles. Specifically, they demonstrate the realizability of such principles. Since this is the case, we must again criticize Kant for maintaining that "examples serve *only* for encouragement."[21] They do indeed encourage us; but this is not their primary function. Kant himself recognizes this when he says that examples "put beyond doubt the feasibility of what the law commands; they make visible that which the practical rule expresses more generally."[22] If this is the case, as Kant says, then examples do more than merely encourage us: They constitute rather an empirical *testing* of the moral value of an ideal, or ideals; and this is not incidental. It is an essential condition of all ideals which are worthy of approval. When we see an exemplification of a principle which we respect, we also *see* the actualization of a way of living which we regard as desirable, or worth desiring. This is not merely a matter of being encouraged. It is *seeing* a principle which is *confirmed* as a realizable way of living. A way of living may be thought of as a pattern which is capable of being realized; but its actual realization puts its practicability beyond the shadow of a doubt. In seeing a person, for example, who is honest in his business relations, we see a *confirmation* of the principle of acting honestly in business. We *see* that it is possible for a person to engage in business, and also be honest. Yet many people doubt that such honesty is possible of achievement. No person, however, can sensibly doubt the possibility of such honesty in business after *seeing* an instance of it in actual business dealings. A person may indeed doubt his own capacities for being honest in business; but this is not doubting the *realizability* of the principle of honesty in business.

An exemplification of any pattern of life which is believed to be worthy of attainment *confirms* the belief in its attainability; and such confirmation is encouraging to a morally earnest person. Such confirmation, however, performs a role which is much more significant than merely giving encouragement. It provides "proof positive" that such a pattern is capable of being fulfilled. That is, it is capable of being empirically confirmed.

A *concept* of a way of living is a moral ideal; and when a way of living is exemplified in practice, an ideal is exemplified. Seeing a person conform to an ideal is *observing* the *confirmation* of an ideal; and, as Kant says, such observing puts "beyond doubt the feasibility of what the (ideal) commands."[23]

5. *A moral philosophy is theoretical and practical*

A moral principle is a pattern of acting, whereas *affirming* a moral principle is *stating* conditions which constitute such a pattern. In affirming even so prosaic a principle, for example, as "Save a penny, and so earn a penny," both a pattern of acting, and also consequences which are correlated with it, are specified. Such a correlation of a pattern of acting with consequences accruing from it may be affirmed in a hypothetical or conditional statement, whose form is: "*If . . . then. . . .*" The "if" specifies conditions which constitute a pattern of acting; and the "then" introduces a description of a type of acting which is correlated with it. Nothing is uncertain about the actual *correlation* which is affirmed between such a pattern of acting and its consequences, since the correlation of a specified set of conditions with a specified set of consequences is explicitly affirmed in every conditional, or hypothetical statement.

Insofar as any consequences which affect the quality of life accrue from any pattern of acting, both the consequences and the pattern have moral significance. Kant, however, classifies a statement of a principle of acting as a "hypothetical imperative" only if it specifies that an "action is good for some purpose"; and he classifies an affirmation as a "categorical imperative" "which declares an action to be (morally) necessary in itself without reference to any purpose."[24] This distinction, however, is not based on the nature of a moral principle; but only on the particular type of acting which is specified in the *affirmation* of a principle.

Every moral principle may be *affirmed* in hypothetical form—even the categorical imperative may be so *affirmed,* since it is also a means for achieving a quality of life which is correlated with a specifiable type of acting. Kant, however, classifies a principle of acting as a "hypothetical imperative" "if the action is good only as a means to something else"; and he does so notwithstanding the fact that every pattern of acting is *morally* significant only by virtue of the quality of living which is correlated with it.[25]

The scope of concern in serious moral reflecting includes all that is capable of affecting beneficially the quality of life. Morally serious reflecting obviously falls short of achieving this objective, or norm, although the fact that a person can specify this as a norm, implies that he is aware that there is more to be known about human life than is now known. The basic "metaphysical" premise of moral faith is the belief that what is possible of being achieved is in excess of all that has already been achieved. It is a belief not only about a reality which is already known, but also about a reality which is knowable, or which is believed to be capable of being known.

A person considers a reality as *knowable* insofar as he believes that there are conditions which are capable of being fulfilled for comprehending its nature. He may believe that such conditions are achievable, without, however, also presuming to know specifically what they are. No one, in fact, can conceive of all that *might* be morally significant in the enrichment of life. In some of our more unrestrained speculations about what is morally possible, we at times think of many men as having the charity of St. Francis. This ideal obviously is almost fantastic in light of what we observe; and yet, it is a *moral* ideal because it is realizable—its realizability has already been demonstrated by St. Francis, and also by others who have conformed to the way of life of St. Francis. The Sermon on the Mount likewise affirms a type of life which, in light of what most of us do most of the time, appears to be unrealizable; and yet, it has been realized by Jesus, as well as by others who also have conformed to its demands upon their lives.

The fact that these ideals have been exemplified in human life is of very great moral significance, since it demonstrates what is *achievable*. What is achievable may well be in excess of what has been achieved; and yet, when an ideal is exemplified, its exemplification constitutes a confirmation of its achievable character. This is not saying that *achievability* is measured by achievement: it is only saying that achievement demonstrates that what is *thought of as achievable* is not a misinterpretation, and has not been unsoundly *affirmed* as a moral ideal.

We cannot at present state the total extent of possible moral principles, because we do not know all possible sets of realizable conditions for the enrichment of human life. If, for example, children had a consistently favorable home life, and a consistently favorable environment in which to live, they might achieve a quality of life of which at present we have little more than the dimmest notion. It is likewise scarcely possible at present to conceive in detail what homes themselves would be if economic, political, and social conditions in no way impaired their well-being; and yet, we do have *some* basis for conceiving what such homes would be when we take account of actual homes in which this ideal is in some way approximated.

One aspect of morally serious reflecting is anticipating what is possible on the basis of what is actual. Although the extent of such anticipating is limited, it is not, however, limited to the actual. The actual is only the basis on which morally serious reflecting is sustained. It is not confined to it, as Kant maintains: "The principles of action as regards the means necessary to attain some possible purpose are in fact infinitely numerous." [26] That is, at present it is not even possible to conceive of everything which could enrich life; although what can be conceived is that much more is possible than has been attained. The extent of what is now known about sets of conditions which constitute actual patterns of living is the scope of our *present* knowledge of moral principles. The number of such principles we now know is finite; although the fact that we are incapable of stipulating how many are capable of being known is acknowledged in affirming that their number is transfinite; or, according to Kant, they are "infinitely numerous."

The theoretical aspect of moral philosophy takes account of *formal* conditions which must be fulfilled by moral principles, whereas the practical value of a moral philosophy consists in describing patterns of acting, or principles, which are conditions for achieving desired qualities of life. No *particular* moral principle, however, is referred to in a formal analysis, although such an analysis is a description of features which every moral principle must exemplify. The theoretical aspect of moral philosophy is a consideration of what constitutes conditions for possible moral principles; and the formal conditions for such principles can be specified without taking account of particular principles. Specifying the properties which make patterns of acting "moral principles" comes within the *theoretical* scope of moral philosophy; and this aspect of analysis may also be classified as the *logical* aspect of moral philosophy.

No person can sustain his thinking about moral principles without reflecting about a *logic* of moral principles; and such reflecting constitutes a *theoretical* aspect of moral philosophy. The *moral* purpose for such reflecting, however, is *practical:* It is clarifying patterns of practice by which actual life can be enriched.

CHAPTER IV

MORAL PHILOSOPHY AS A CLARIFICATION OF MORAL PROBLEMS

1. *A moral philosophy is one condition for morality*

An individual can make decisions without reflecting on them, and he can in turn reflect about his decisions without also considering them as *types* of acting. In reflecting about them as types of acting which affect the quality of life, however, an individual engages in a reflecting which is peculiar to a philosophy. A moral philosophy is reflecting about *types* of acting; about *types* of choices; and about *types* of conditions in which choices can be made with benefit to human life.

A capacity to formulate a philosophy is only one aspect of intelligence; whereas a capacity to use a philosophy for the actual benefiting of human life is another aspect of intelligence; and the latter is the only aspect of intelligence for which a morally serious person has any respect. Although a systematizing of reflecting is a *formal* condition for a moral philosophy, a reflecting on moral distinctions may conform to this formal requirement without, however, performing any "moral" function in actually contributing beneficially to human life; and it is this fact which accounts for the restricted "moral" value of some moral philosophies. The moral value of a moral philosophy consists in the use to which it is put in benefiting human life; and this, in turn, consists in clarifying decisions and choices. Such a use of a philosophy, therefore, presupposes more than a capacity to reflect about *types* of problems. It presupposes also a capacity to use such reflecting in coping with concrete problems. The first is theoretical. The second is practical; and the test of the moral significance of the first is always in terms of the second. A moral philosophy, as an expression of consistent reflecting, is an intellectual achievement; and it becomes a specifically *moral* instrument only as it clarifies the decisions which an individual makes in concrete situations. The extent to which a person uses his intelligence for enlightening his decisions is the measure of his morality; or as Plato says, a person is "good in the things in which he is intelligent."[1] Morality is intelligence which is expressed in living, and it is not merely intelligence which is expressed in reflecting about living, or intelligence which is expressed in formulating a philosophy about living.

One method for achieving an ordered life is reflecting about the actual situations with which a person is confronted. Another method is reflecting about a moral philosophy, which, in turn, is an expression of reflecting about living. A moral philosophy about which an individual reflects is thus logically prior to *his* reflecting about it, although its moral usefulness for him is subsequent to his own reflecting about it. Insofar as philosophies are already formulated which can help a person to clarify his own life by analyzing *types* of problems, and *types* of ways in which such problems can be faced, a person can be benefited by reflecting on such philosophies.

Everyone can learn something which is beneficial by reflecting on another's philosophy, even when the primary benefit from such reflecting is learning what is *not* worth doing. Learning what is not capable of contributing to the enrichment of life is a very important benefit which can be achieved by reflecting on what has been formulated in moral philosophies. In reading *Ecclesiastes*, for example, a person is made aware of a great number of blind alleys in which the writer of this ancient document entered. In declaring that he tried to find life by getting "singers, both men and women, and many concubines (for his) delight," he states conditions which did not give him the quality of life which he sought.[2] Hence his complaint that "All is vanity" is instructive for anyone who understands that it is correlated with a specifiable pattern of living.[3] In reading the statement that "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink," a person understands why the writer of this ancient book should also complain that "All things are full of weariness."[4] One learns much from reading *Ecclesiastes,* and from reflecting on the record of this reflective "Preacher, the son of David." After reflecting on the ways which brought this person to the conclusion that "All is vanity," one understands something of the moral soundness of this same person's conclusion that "Wisdom is better than might."[5] Reflecting on the ways which men have found to be futile is one way by which a person can become clear about the folly of trying to find the enrichment of life in such ways. Anyone who has done any reflecting is, therefore, aware of the sound principle which is affirmed by the writer of *Ecclesiastes:* "It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than hear the song of fools."[6]

A person need not himself test every pattern of living in order to ascertain its moral significance, provided he has the advantage of reflecting on experiments in living which have already been conducted. One aspect of morally serious reflecting, therefore, is thinking about possible *ways* to achieve an enrichment of life. In reflecting about such ways, a person becomes aware of a range of conceivable ways of living; and in reflecting about the qualities of life which are correlated with such ways of living, he can select from among them the ones which he most esteems as worthy of his own respect.

In clarifying one's own moral ideal by this roundabout method of reflecting, a person also acquires a moral authority which is not a product of blind acceptance. It is reflectively selected from among a range of possible patterns of living; and when a person selects one way of living from among others of which he is clearly aware, his selection expresses *his* choice. In such a type of selecting, he achieves a reflected-upon life which is not possible by any other method.

There are no short cuts to enlightened living. Reflecting on moral philosophies is one method to achieve enlightened living; but enlightened living is not confined to reflecting on moral philosophies. Reflecting on moral philosophies is not even an indispensable condition for enlightened living, although it is an indispensable condition for reflecting on *ways of living* which have already been conceived.

2. *A moral philosophy does not resolve all moral problems*

A development of one's capacities to reflect, and to order his reflecting into a coherent system, is an intellectual achievement. A person who regards such an achievement as desirable also regards a development of his capacities to formulate a philosophy as itself a moral good. He considers it a moral good not only because it is instrumental in ordering his life, but also because it is a *type* of life which he regards as worthy of his devoted efforts. In other words, a moral philosophy is itself *a* moral end. In saying this, a person does not necessarily maintain that it is *the* one good in life. Yet, the enlightening of life by sustained reflecting on the nature of life is *a* good.

A moral philosophy is an expression of moral integrity insofar as it is an expression of honest reflecting. Integrity, in turn, is a moral achievement which is acquired only by being honest in whatever one does; and being honest in what one thinks about human life is developing such a capacity for integrity. Anyone who is aware of the effort which is required to be honest in thinking about perplexing problems in life does not, therefore, look upon an honest moral philosophy merely as an academic accomplishment. He looks upon it rather as a distinctly moral achievement: it reveals what a person does to direct his interests and abilities into one type of effort. Such directing of interests and abilities is a moral operation; but it is not a *resolution* of all moral problems. It is an analysis of moral problems; and such an analysis of problems is a moral philosophy, the moral justification for which is the clarification of life that is accomplished in such an analysis.

Clarifying the nature of life by reflecting is an essential requirement of a reflective person. A person who wants a clarified life does not measure the worth of his reflecting by a criterion other than a clarification of his life. A clarification of his life by reflecting is the moral use itself to which he desires to put his capacities for reflecting. The morality of a reflective person includes such effort; and it includes it as one of the justifications itself for living, since a morally serious person lives in order to become enlightened. As Aristotle points out, living without reflecting differs in no essential way from animal life.

In reflecting on moral problems, a person does not necessarily resolve them; but in reflecting on them, he clarifies them. That is, he becomes aware of their nature; and in achieving this, he is enabled to live with a clarified problem. In so doing, he does not necessarily remove the problem; but he removes from his life the ignorance which is associated with it before he reflected on it.

In reflecting on life for the purpose of understanding life, a person introduces into his life a clarification of at least some of its problems. Although a clarification of this sort is not the sole objective of reflecting, it is, nevertheless, one essential aspect of it; and such an enlightening of life is itself a moral good. A person, therefore, does not ask what justifies such enlightening, since an enlightening of life is itself a justification for living.

There are indeed problems with which a person is confronted before he reflects; and there are problems which persist in his life after he reflects. But the difference in problems upon which a person has not reflected, and those upon which he has reflected, is the difference between an ignorance of which he is not aware, and an ignorance of which he is aware. Socrates may well have been the first to make this distinction into an essential part of reflective living; since an ignorance of which he was aware prompted him to reflect about the nature of ignorance itself. In so doing, he became aware of the nature of himself as being ignorant of much. A person even has a moral philosophy in becoming aware of all he does not understand about the nature of life, since such a philosophy is a person's reflecting upon life; and in such reflecting, he becomes aware of aspects of his ignorance of which he was not aware before he reflects.

There are, of course, many problems with which everyone is confronted in life, an awareness of which is not dependent upon having a moral philosophy. A person, for example, may be aware of his *legal* right to claim an exemption on his income tax, and yet be disturbed about his *moral* right to do so. Aware that the operation of a government must be paid for by someone, he may well be perplexed about his taking an exemption which reduces his part in supporting the operation of his government. A problem of this type, however, arises only for a person who takes account of rights which are not merely granted by law, but of rights which he himself has to approve; and acting in a way which a person himself cannot approve is creating for himself a problem of which an unreflective person is not even aware. Only a morally serious person who is capable of reflecting on the nature of moral rights, in distinction to legal rights, can be aware of problems which are entailed in this sort of distinction. A person, however, who is aware of this type of distinction would not be willing to live as if there were no such distinction, even though many people may not even be aware of it.

One of many perplexities which confronts a reflective person is the fact that problems which are most acute for a morally serious person are not even problems for others. Even when stated as problems, many people do not comprehend them as problems, much less as problems which justify anyone's sustained reflecting. Ascertaining how many of such self-imposed problems there are which come under the scope of morally serious reflecting is itself a moral problem. Another moral problem is considering whether the increase of an awareness of problems is actually an enrichment of life. Yet, when the enrichment of life is thought of in terms of enlightenment, this problem is clarified; and a person is no longer perplexed by the *moral* justification for reflecting when he sincerely believes that an enlightening of life is itself a moral good.

If, on the other hand, an enlightening of life is not regarded as an achievement which itself justifies living, then becoming aware of moral problems would not itself be thought of as a moral good. If, for instance, a person were to conceive of the purpose of living as achieving "peace of mind," which is thought of as living without an awareness of problems, then an enlightenment of life which was brought about by an awareness of problems obviously could not be morally justified. It can be justified only by a person who esteems the enlightenment of life as itself a moral justification for living. Such a person, therefore, would find something pathetic in Epicurus' ideal of a "Garden" from which all disturbing reflecting is banned. The moral justification for reflecting, according to Epicurus, is creating a context in which a person can enjoy peace of mind and health of body. Yet, if a person looks upon the moral purpose for reflecting as becoming enlightened of the nature of life, he does not disparage thinking, even though it does impair his so-called "peace of mind." A person who honestly wants to understand the nature of life does not accommodate such an objective to the criterion of living without an awareness of problems, even though some of these problems may be very disturbing.

Any question about moral rights is a morally disturbing problem; and so long as anyone seriously thinks about the *rights* to which he is morally entitled in his relation to others, he will never have "the peace of mind" of which Epicurus speaks. Yet, he will have the enlightenment of life of which Socrates speaks; and for an achievement of which Socrates devoted his life.

3. *A moral philosophy clarifies moral problems*

One aspect of moral philosophizing is clarifying problems; and the clarification at which we arrive as a result of such reflecting is our moral philosophy. Reflective living is one type of living; and it is out of this type of living alone that moral philosophies arise. Moral philosophies, however, need not be concerned primarily with defending the reflective type of life, since the very worth of reflecting may itself constitute one of the problems about which a serious person reflects. Everyone who has thought very seriously about his life has, at one time or another, doubted whether sustained reflecting is a contribution to the enrichment of life. A momentary doubt of this sort is not as such a moral philosophy; although it is a type of thinking, which, if continued, might become a moral philosophy. The fact that a person may doubt the worth of reflecting, and still continue to reflect makes the difference between momentary thinking—and so nonphilosophical reflecting—and sustained, or philosophical thinking. There is, of course, no quantitative criterion by which these two types of thinking can satisfactorily be distinguished, since their difference is not quantitative, but is moral. Sustaining a reflective inquiry into the role which reflecting itself performs in affecting the quality of life is one expression of moral purpose; and it is this type of reflecting which characterizes the profoundest moral philosophies—one of which is philosophical Buddhism.

One of the problems with which Buddhist philosophers have struggled is clarifying the grounds on which life itself can be justified; and the concept of the Bodhisattva expresses what the reflective Buddhist believes can justify living. He believes that the enlightening of life itself makes life worth living. This enlightening of an individual's own life is, however, according to a reflective Buddhist, not the only justification for living. Another justification for living is doing all that an enlightened person can do to use his enlightenment for the purpose of enlightening the lives of others; and in using his enlightenment for this purpose, a Buddhist lives according to his ideal of a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is one who is enlightened about the nature of life sufficiently to enjoy the blessedness of enlightened living—which is Nirvana. Yet, in being aware of the plight of others who live under the burden of ignorance, a bodhisattva foregoes Nirvana in order to help others. In so doing, he finds a moral justification for his own life.

One of the notable achievements in human life is the sustained devotion of Gautama, the Buddha, in clarifying the justification for reflecting. So notable, in fact, is this achievement, that Gautama has been esteemed by millions as *the* Enlightened One. What, however, makes the reflecting of Gautama more than a philosophical activity, but also a moral activity, is the purpose for which he reflected. He reflected for the purpose of clarifying the *way* by which men might achieve the completest fulfillment of their capacities for living.

Included in living, are the multiple desires which constitute its appetitive aspect. Gautama reflected about these; and thereby subjected this aspect of human life to moral scrutiny. He thought about what justifies the satisfying of desires, when desires are themselves regarded as the very source of man's dissatisfactions.

Many reflective persons in the West doubt the justification for living; yet, when they do, it is ordinarily not on the basis of reflecting about the nature of desire as incapable of being fulfilled. It is rather on the basis of desiring types of objects which cannot satisfy desire; and it is this type of reflecting which is expressed in such a notable form in the questioning with which Jesus confronts us. He asks us: "Why do you put your heart on *things* which rust destroys, and which can be stolen by thieves?" This question, therefore, is fundamentally different from the question which Gautama asks; and it is fundamentally different because Jesus does not question the moral worth of desire itself. He questions only the justification for desiring certain types of things, because they are incapable of fulfilling the desire to achieve the abundant life. Gautama, on the other hand, questions the very possibility of fulfilling desire. Jesus does not question this, because he is confident that there are goods which are capable of fulfilling desire—and are capable of doing so in a way which brings desire itself into the abundant life.

Different though the views of Gautama and Jesus are, both of these founders of world religions agree, nevertheless, that no man can be freed from the burden of ignorance without first reflecting. Reflecting, as Jesus did, upon the very distinction between goods which are capable of contributing to the abundant life, and those which are not, is clarifying a fundamental moral problem. Yet only a person who is aware of the incapacity of certain types of goods to fulfill desire would come to the conclusion either of Jesus or of Gautama. Likewise, only a person who is aware that desires themselves create some of the most acute problems in living would continue to reflect until he became clear about how to cope with such desires; and such reflecting is one moral operation upon life which would not be sustained unless a person had first thought through the justification for doing so.

It is impossible to reflect about moral issues without also becoming aware of moral problems which must be clarified. In asking the question, for example, "What kind of life is most worth living?," we raise a fundamental question of reflective life. Answering this question is itself clarifying the question; and in clarifying what is meant by the expression, "most worth living," we formulate a normative morality. In other words, we specify a moral norm which is the kind of life that we regard as "most worth living"; and yet, it is this "kind of life" which we endeavor to ascertain as the reward of our serious reflecting. We certainly cannot be clear about what it is before we reflect; and so a clarification of the expression, "The kind of life . . . most worth living," is the objective which a morally serious person strives to achieve in formulating his moral philosophy. The more extensive his philosophy is, the more he clarifies the meaning of this question. In fact, in order to comprehend the meaning of the question, "What kind of life is *most* worth living?," a person must have a comprehension of a very wide range of possible types of life. But reflecting upon *types* of life, in distinction to instances of living, is a considerable intellectual achievement.

Even in affirming, for instance, what appears to be so simple a statement as "Moral values take precedence over all other values," a person specifies a basic objective of all reflective living, which is ascertaining what are the moral values that "take precedence over all other values." [7] A person would not, however, be competent to classify the values which make up this class without also knowing their significance in terms of human life; and knowing this much is having knowledge of every possible set of conditions which could affect the quality of human life. In fact, only as a person knows this much, would he actually be qualified to select *one* such set of conditions as *the* pattern of living which is worth approving as having "precedence over *all* other values."

It is a simple matter for anyone to make the statement: "Moral values take precedence over all other values"; but understanding what this statement means as an *empirically* significant affirmation presupposes a knowledge of all that constitutes the scope of moral values. Moral values may be defined as those sets of conditions which are capable of contributing to the enrichment of life; and as such, they "take precedence over all other values." Yet, knowing what a person specifically refers to when he speaks about such values presupposes a comprehension of what affects the character of life; and this knowledge is not confined to the procedure of an analytical philosophy.

One task of analytical philosophy is specifying the scope of moral problems, and although this task of analytical philosophy may seem restricted, it is, nevertheless, an indispensable condition for a reflective analysis of life. A person cannot reflect about life as a moral problem without also clarifying his own reflecting; and this constitutes one aspect of analytical philosophy.

Some details are included in this aspect of philosophy which appear to be so simple that a person almost hesitates to dignify them with the appellation "*philosophical* problems." Yet in reflecting on them, he becomes aware that they are not simple, and so are not easily clarified. In fact, they are clarified only as a person formulates a philosophy. At an early age, for example, everyone has affirmed: "I am pleased." Yet, few have ever reflected about this statement as constituting a *moral* problem, let alone a *philosophical* problem. It is, however, a profound philosophical problem, as Professor Moore points out when he says: "Well, if it is true, what does that mean?"[8]

We cannot even begin to think about this without becoming almost bewildered by the extent of the problem of its clarification. The very term "I," for instance, designates one of the most complex realities about which any person can reflect. In fact, all rationalistic and idealistic philosophies may be considered as expressions of serious reflective efforts to clarify the meaning of this term. The philosophy of Socrates, for example, might well be considered as an expression of the attempt to understand what is designated by the term "I." If a person were to think about the philosophies which have attempted to state the meaning of the term "I," he would indeed consider a very extensive part of the history of philosophy—and all of this would take place in reflecting on this statement: "*I* am pleased."

Yet after this extensive thinking, a person would not have even considered the meaning of the word "pleased"—an analysis of which constitutes the history of hedonistic philosophies. Insofar as moral philosophies are concerned with an analysis of the nature of pleasure and its various aspects, a reflecting about the meaning of the term "pleased" or "pleasure," would, in turn, be a review of a very extensive segment of the history of moral philosophies. As a person thinks about this, he realizes how profound Professor Moore's question is: "What does that mean when a person says, 'I am pleased'?"

It was Socrates who first, so far as we know, raised a question of this sort to the level of philosophy, and dignified this type of analysis with the title, "Seeking wisdom through understanding." Such understanding, according to Socrates, is the nature of knowledge; and according to him, it is the most treasured thing in life. Socrates repeatedly asks the question: "What does it mean?"; and it this question which we again ask when we think seriously about life, and about our reflecting upon its nature.

A person obviously cannot understand what he means when he says, "I am pleased," without also being clear about why being pleased is morally desirable. Yet, most of us affirm: "I am pleased," as if this fact were itself a criterion of what is morally worth desiring. When, however, we begin to reflect about the possible meaning of this expression, we become bewildered about what we actually do mean.

Few people might hesitate to affirm, as Protarchus does in the *Philebus,* that an ideal life is living "in the enjoyment of the greatest pleasure." [9] Yet, as we reflect about the argument which Plato states in this dialogue, we almost become ashamed for believing, even tentatively, that the ideal of life is as Protarchus states it; and only when we clearly comprehend the question which Socrates asks of Protarchus, do we become aware of what is implied in this ideal of life. Socrates asks Protarchus: "Would you think that you needed nothing else if you possessed this one blessing in completeness?" It is only when we comprehend what is implied in this question that we also doubt the adequacy of this ideal. And it is only when we reflect on the challenge which Socrates implores, "Consider what you are saying," that we really do any soul-searching. This challenge makes us disbelieve that the hedonistic ideal, as stated by Protarchus, is what *we* could seriously accept as the ideal of life; and we fully realize what this challenge entails only when we also think about the further questioning by Socrates: "Would you not need to be wise and intelligent and reasonable, nor anything like this?"

As soon as we think about the conditions on the ground of which we are *willing* to be pleased, we take account of a moral criterion by which we evaluate the worth of pleasure itself. It is just this moral aspect of the ideal of pleasure which Socrates stresses; and it is only when we think about this moral aspect of the ideal of being pleased that we ourselves begin to understand its meaning. We cannot even understand the statement, "Pleasure is a good, and being pleased is a good," unless we take account of a *moral* criterion. The very conditions on the ground of which we evaluate pleasure, or being pleased, as "good," are a moral norm other than pleasure, or being pleased. That there is such a norm of which we are aware in some of our more reflective moments, is, however, the very fact which Socrates stresses.

The norm by which we exaluate our pleasures, or our being pleased, as "good," includes everything that we respect and esteem in life. Only as we understand what Socrates means when he asks, "Would you be willing to be devoid of any kind of wisdom?", and "Would you be willing to be bereft of your reasoning capacities?," do we realize what is meant when we affirm that we should be willing to live our *whole* lives "in the enjoyment of the greatest pleasures."

We are willing and anxious to have pleasures, and to be pleased, as one aspect of our lives; but when it comes to be willing to forego every other quality of life in order to enjoy "being pleased," we doubt the soundness of the hedonistic ideal.

Plato states the hedonistic ideal in the *Philebus* in the strongest possible way; and in so doing, he has enabled us to realize what is implied in this ideal. In becoming clear about what is implied in it, we understand it; and this understanding is itself one good which we would not be willing to forego for any amount of "being pleased."

One aspect of moral philosophizing is considering what is affirmed as an ideal. It is philosophizing of a type which is referred to in relatively recent philosophy as "analytical," or as "philosophical analysis," or even as "semantical analysis." Such analysis, however, is not confined to words, since it is a scrutiny of words as vehicles of meanings, and only as a person becomes clear about the meaning of a language which is used for stating moral distinctions, does he understand the distinctions which are affirmed by means of language. Understanding, for instance, the language with which a moral ideal is affirmed is also understanding what is implied in that ideal; and making this clear, is explicating the *language* with which an ideal is affirmed. Explicating, or clarifying, such language is itself a moral problem.

In understanding, for example, the affirmations of Protarchus about the ideal of living one's "whole life in the enjoyment of the greatest pleasures," a person is confronted with a moral problem. He may well accept this ideal, as Protarchus himself did, and yet, after understanding its clarification, such as is stated in the *Philebus*, reject it; but in so doing, he is thankful for its clarification as a contribution to the clarifying of his life. In the clarification which is given by Plato, a person is enabled to understand what is entailed for his own life if he were to accept the ideal of Protarchus.

A philosophy can be effective as a means for clarifying life only if it is an explication of morally significant concepts. The more a person reflects about moral ideals, for instance, the more will he also reflect about the critical terms with which moral distinctions are made; and the more will he become convinced that one supremely desirable aspect of morally serious living is a clarification of the vocabulary with which reflecting about life is itself affirmed. He then realizes how sound is Professor Moore's declaration: "It is very common to hold a doctrine, without being clearly aware what it is you hold." [10]

Clarifying morally significant terms is one procedure in philosophizing. Morally significant terms are clarified in a philosophy, however, for the "practical" purpose of enabling a person to understand morally meaningful concepts; and only as such terms are clarified, can the concepts which constitute their meaning be evaluated for their actual moral adequacy. A philosophical clarification of concepts has *moral* value, therefore, only insofar as it contributes to enlightened living, which is another way of saying that its moral value is its role in clarifying issues and problems with which we are confronted in living. It is, therefore, not merely a clarification of our vocabulary; since in clarifying the vocabulary which we use when we reflect about moral problems, we also clarify our lives.

4. *A moral philosophy is an analysis of moral concepts*

A moral philosophy is a clarification of concepts which, for the most part, are current in everyday comments about moral distinctions. Concepts which are clarified in a moral philosophy are, therefore, not unique to a moral philosophy. Most people, for example, use terms such as "right" and "wrong," "good" and "bad," for evaluating acts, or types of acts; but in using such terms, they are seldom aware of all that they take for granted. Yet, becoming aware of what is taken for granted in classifying an act as "right," for instance, is clarifying the meaning of the term "right"; and this includes an inventory of the presuppositions which are taken for granted in distinguishing what is referred to as "right," from what is referred to by terms which have an opposite sense.

This distinction between "right" and its opposite, however, employs a discursive logic. Yet, the justification for thinking according to such a logic has been contested in some of the most extensive of philosophical analyses. In fact, a considerable part of present-day criticisms of Aristotelian logic discredit discursive logic as the criterion of intelligible thinking. As stated by Aristotle, the so-called "Laws of logic" take for granted that if the term "right," for instance, has an intelligible meaning, it can be clearly distinguished from the meanings of all other words; and in a sense, this is obvious, although it is not equally obvious that such a clear-cut distinction is defensible when we make *moral* distinctions. What, however, is of *basic* importance in a moral philosophy is the soundness of *types* of morally significant distinctions. Hence we cannot reflect about the soundness of classifying a particular act as "right," and classifying another as "not right," without also reflecting on the very soundness of the logic with which we make this twofold classification. In assuming that what we classify as "right" *is* radically distinct from all that we do not refer to by the term "right," we indeed take very much for granted: We take for granted the very logic with which we use these morally significant terms.

It is one thing to assume that terms which are used to designate moral distinctions are intelligible; and it is quite another thing to assume that a *logic* which is taken for granted in making such distinctions is also defensible. In making distinctions between what is right, and what is not right, we take for granted that a twofold classification is sound; and we must assume this before we can earnestly affirm such distinctions. Yet, when we question the very adequacy of this type of logic, we also question the soundness of a fundamental *type* of moral distinction. In questioning the logical defensibility of classifying according to two mutually exclusive categories, we question the defensibility of evaluating according to the exclusive categories of "right" and "wrong"; "good" and "bad"; "moral" and "immoral." Yet, the very basis of many of our most commonly made moral distinctions is this logic of Excluded Middle, according to which, there *are* two mutually exclusive categories. Hence, if we question the logical defensibility of thinking according to the principle of Excluded Middle, we must also question the defensibility of moral distinctions which are made according to this same principle. A basic logical problem is thus prior to a fundamental moral problem.

This particular problem is considering the criterion of the very intelligibility of moral distinctions. It is, of course, obvious that if thinking in mutually exclusive categories were a criterion of intelligibility, we could not even intelligibly question the logical character of such thinking. Yet, if in our philosophical reflecting we scrutinize whatever we take for granted, then we must examine even the basic logical principles themselves according to which we classify our thinking as "intelligible." When we reflect on the soundness of moral distinctions in terms of "right," as exclusive of another morally significant category such as "wrong," we must consider the adequacy of the logic itself with which we make such a classification. In becoming aware of this problem, we thus take account of more than moral distinctions. We consider also a type of thinking; and in considering it for its adequacy for making moral evaluations, we reflect about the adequacy of a logic which we commonly take for granted. Questioning the adequacy of a logic which we commonly take for granted thus goes as counter to an unreflected-upon logic as a Buddhist's scrutiny of desire goes counter to a type of living in which desires are taken for granted, and so are regarded as outside the scope of reflective scrutiny.

Yet just what is "outside" the scope of critical scrutiny cannot itself be known until we reflect. We certainly cannot assign limits to reflecting before we reflect; and in the process of reflecting, we become aware of the caprice of assigning limits to reflecting, since in so doing, we arbitrarily decide to stop reflecting.

When, for instance, we reflect on a term which we use to make a moral distinction, we are confronted with a philosophical problem, the scope of which we cannot foresee before we reflect; and in the process of reflecting, we become aware that there is no foreseeable limit to the problems of which we may become aware in such reflecting.

When we clarify the language which we use for affirming moral distinctions, we also clarify moral distinctions themselves. Thus the analytical procedure of philosophical analysis may itself be regarded as an aspect of morally serious living. When, for example, we clarify the term "egoism" as a classification of a type of living, we also clarify what we think about a possible type of life. We may think of this type of life in terms of pleasure, or of happiness, or even of enlightenment; but whatever its particular content may be, we are aware that a person is an "egoist" if he is concerned exclusively with his own life, and so with his own pleasure, or happiness, or enlightenment.

In order to understand the meaning of the term "egoism," we need not also evaluate the particular quality of life which an egoist regards as having primary significance. When we understand that a person's concern is confined to his own well-being, irrespective of the particular way in which such well-being is defined, we also clarify the meaning of the term "egoism." Clarifying the term "egoism," however, is becoming clear about a *type* of living, and not only about the sense of a word; but in becoming aware of this, we have the advantage of understanding what is implied in exemplifying such a type of living, or, in other words, in being an "egoist."

The contribution which any clarifying of terms may make to reflective living is primarily intellectual. Such a clarification, however, also performs a distinctly moral function, since it enables a reflective person to become aware of what would constitute the scope of his concern if he were to exemplify in his own life the set of conditions which is referred to by a particular term, such as "egoism";

and in becoming aware of the poverty of an egoistic type of life, a person is able to evaluate the moral worth of this type of life. When a morally serious person understands the nature of an egoistic type of life, he likewise knows enough to enable him to reject egoism as a morally impoverished philosophical doctrine.

We take account of another basic type of living when we clarify the meaning of the term "altruism." Altruism as a moral philosophy is an analysis of a type of living in which interest in the well-being of *others* is a primary moral concern. If an altruistic person thinks of the most desirable type of life in terms of enlightenment, for example, he also desires to do all he can to enable others to become enlightened. Whatever he regards as constituting enlightenment, defines for him his specific responsibility in relation to others. What is entailed in clarifying the meaning of altruism as a type of life is not, therefore, a clarification of what constitutes the most desired form of life. It is rather clarifying the *scope* of life of which a person takes account when he does what he believes constitutes his moral responsibility.

A person may consistently defend both altruism and also hedonism in one moral philosophy. In defending altruism, he may maintain that moral responsibility extends to others, and is fulfilled only insofar as a person does all he can to enable others to achieve well-being. In conceiving such well-being as pleasure, he looks upon moral responsibility as doing all that a person can do to use his resources and capacities for enabling others to enjoy pleasure.

In becoming aware of the meaning of the term "altruism" as a type of moral philosophy, one thus becomes clear that altruism is not exclusive of hedonism. "Altruism" and "hedonism" are terms of logically different orders. One term refers to the *scope* of consideration which is regarded as constituting an individual's moral responsibility; whereas the other term refers to a *content* which is regarded as constituting the most desired form of living.

One becomes aware of still another moral philosophy when he clarifies the meaning of the term "equalitarianism." This term designates the belief that a morally serious person is concerned for the well-being of *every* other person. If an individual, therefore, were to think of moral responsibility as extending to every person by virtue of the right of human life to well-being, he would classify himself with the term "equalitarian." In so doing, he would recognize that he could at the same time be an altruist, or could respect altruism as a clarification of the *scope* of moral responsibility, and he could also be a hedonist, insofar as he believes that the most desirable quality of living is "being pleased," or is having pleasure. In defining his responsibility as doing all that he possibly can to help others to achieve a pleasurable quality of life, he would indeed be an altruist; and in respecting the right of *everyone* to share in his concern for such a quality of life, he would be an equalitarian.

A clarification of terms, such as "hedonism," "egoism," "altruism," and "equalitarianism," is morally helpful provided it enables a person to understand possible types of living. It is also helpful if it enables him to understand what he himself would be if he were accurately classified by any of these terms.

No *moral* philosophy invents its own vocabulary, but takes over a vocabulary which is already in use for making moral distinctions. In reflecting, however, on the meaning of terms which are used in this way, a person explicates or clarifies the meaning of morally significant terms. Anyone, therefore, who formulates a "critical" moral philosophy makes a contribution not only to moral philosophy, but also to moral living, and so to the scope of life which is designated "morality." When we analyze the philosophy of Plato, for example, we become aware that Plato endeavored to make such a contribution. One of the terms which he endeavored to clarify is "knowledge," since he regarded knowledge as a criterion by which the very worth of life itself may be evaluated; and as he analyzed this term, he developed not only a theory of knowledge, but also a philosophy of value. In developing a philosophy of value, however, he formulated a metaphysic, or a theory about the nature of reality. Thus beginning as Socrates did with an analysis of moral terms, he went through the gamut of philosophy.

Plato shows us that we cannot even speak of "knowing" the meaning of a word without also having some notion about what we mean when we speak of "knowing." Knowing the meaning of a term, however, is having one type of knowledge; although we cannot understand what such knowledge is until we have clarified the meaning of the term "knowledge." And a clarification of this term is itself a philosophy of knowledge. In claiming likewise that we know what we ourselves value, we use the term "value" with which to clarify the content of such presumed "knowledge." But we do not understand of what such knowledge consists until we have clarified the meaning of the term "value"; and clarifying this is formulating a philosophy of value. Insofar as we believe that there are *things* which are valued, we are confronted with the inescapable philosophical problem of specifying the nature of such things; and an explication, or clarification, of this is a philosophy of reality.

A philosophy of reality is critical, however, only insofar as it includes a clarification of the sense with which the word "reality" is used; and this includes a clarification of the presuppositions which are made in employing this word. In studying the history of philosophy from an "analytical" point of view, we thus become aware of what is meant when it is said that every philosophy is a defense of presuppositions which often are not acknowledged as presuppositions. Yet, until they are acknowledged, no philosophy is entitled to be regarded as "critical" or as "analytical."

5. *A moral philosophy conforms to logical requirements*

A person's reflecting qualifies as *a* philosophy only to the extent that it is internally consistent; and conversely, to the extent that a person's reflecting is not consistent, it does not qualify as *a* philosophy. The article "a" by which reflecting is classified as "*a* philosophy" itself implies the logical criterion of consistency, since insofar as reflecting is not consistent, it does not constitute *a* philosophy. It constitutes rather as many philosophies as there are sets of internally consistent affirmations.

A consistent ordering of reflecting is an intellectual operation for the purpose of fulfilling an intellectual requirement. As Aristotle points out, the fulfillment of any requirement is a satisfaction; and fulfilling an intellectual requirement is a distinctly intellectual satisfaction. Anyone who believes this also believes, as Kant does, that "human reason . . . finds complete satisfaction only in a perfectly systematic unity of its knowledge." [11] Anyone, in fact, who has an intellectual capacity to order his thoughts coherently, would maintain this, since ordering one's thoughts coherently is thinking logically.

A person's concern for the coherent character of his thinking is a logical requirement; and fulfilling this requirement is, for some individuals, as much a part of the moral operation upon the resources for living as is reflecting itself. Reflecting is an indispensable condition for a morality which consists of using available resources for the purpose of achieving the enrichment of living; and one condition for such an enrichment is logical. It is ordering a reflecting about life into an internally consistent set of interpretations of life.

Reflecting may, of course, be ordered in ways which are not internally consistent; and this is the manner in which eclectic philosophies are formulated. Since the procedure for formulating an eclectic philosophy does not require internal consistency, it is not surprising, therefore, that the consequence of this procedure is not a logically consistent philosophy, but is rather a collection of statements, each of which may be morally helpful, although collectively they are not *intellectually* satisfying, because they are not ordered into a coherent system.

A person may, as Kant says, select "a little of this, and little of that, in marvelous mixture," without even being aware of the absence of logical order in the selecting.[12] Such a person may indeed be helped by the ideas which he includes in his eclectic philosophy; but insofar as he requires an order in his thinking, as well as an order in his living, he will not be *morally* satisfied with such an eclectic collection because it is not also *intellectually* satisfying. An intellectual requirement is one aspect of life; and the life which includes this peculiar requirement cannot even achieve its moral fulfillment apart from these logical conditions.

A person takes account primarily of *intellectual* capacities when he makes the distinction between individuals who require highly complex moral philosophies, and those who require only the help of logically unrelated principles. A person with comparatively undeveloped intellectual capacities does not have the same demands made upon his intelligence as another person does who has more highly developed intellectual capacities. Both types of individuals, therefore, are confronted with different problems, because they are confronted with different requirements. A person, who by virtue of his training, has developed an intellectual capacity to think consistently, cannot be satisfied with an expression of thinking which is not consistent, or which is less consistent than he is aware that it can be, and so should be. The "should" in this case is not only logical. It is also moral, since it is immoral for a person who has capacities to order his thinking to permit himself to accept an expression of his own thinking which is incompletely or inconsistently ordered.

Consistency is a property of propositions; and respecting this property is a minimum responsibility of any person who presumes to formulate *a* moral philosophy. This responsibility consists in ordering affirmations, or statements of belief, into a set which is capable of being comprehended as *a* coherent set, and, as Kant maintains, such "consistency is the highest obligation of a philosopher."[13]

The self-imposed demand for logical consistency in formulating a philosophy is an intellectual requirement; and insofar as a person requires such consistency in his reflecting, his moral philosophy will be morally acceptable to him on no terms other than logical. This is not saying that the only requirement which a morally earnest person imposes upon his own moral philosophy is internal consistency. Internal consistency, however, is a *minimum intellectual property* which a philosophy must have in order to be *intellectually* acceptable to a person who thinks about moral problems. Formulating a philosophy is fulfilling an intellectual requirement as *one* aspect of a life which seeks to develop its capacities for the enrichment of living; and the criterion for such a philosophy is consistency, or as Kant says, it is "rational conceivability."

An important distinction, however, must be made which Kant does not make. It is a distinction between logical conceivability and moral achievability. A moral term must be *conceivable,* otherwise it can not be an idea of what is worthy of achievement in life. It must, however, be achievable as an objective in life, otherwise it is not a moral ideal. Whereas the criterion of the *conceivability* of an ideal is a logical requirement; the criterion of *achievability* is an empirical requirement.

A moral ideal must be comprehensible, or capable of being understood; and this is a logical requirement. Kant, therefore, soundly maintains that only "conceivable," or "intelligible," or "intrinsically possible" patterns of living are moral ideals; but he must be criticized when he maintains that "Whatever is possible *only by the power of some rational being* may also be conceived as a possible purpose of some will." [14] The converse alone is admissible as a position in an empirical moral philosophy: "A *possible* purpose of some will" must be conceivable if it is capable of being *articulated* as a moral ideal.

6. *A moral philosophy is a reasoned argument*

A philosophy is a reasoned argument which consists of affirming a point of view and supporting it by what is regarded as relevant evidence. Formulating a reasoned argument is one expression of reflecting; but evaluating the reasoned character of such an argument is another expression of reflecting. Although there is no radical distinction between these two expressions of reflecting, there is, however, a difference in their functions. Affirming a belief must be distinguished from affirming a reasoned defense for such a belief; and *stating* a reasoned defense for a belief, must in turn, be distinguished from *reflectively considering* its defensibility. Considering these several aspects of reflecting is taking account of the *rational* nature of reflecting; and this is considered the adequacy of a reasoned defense of a philosophy.

Whereas any philosophy is an expression of reflecting, only a logically critical philosophy conforms to logical criteria. Such criteria are both the internal consistency of a set of statements, and also the adequacy of the reasoning which is expressed in the statements. In light of this analysis of the logical criteria of moral philosophy, it is evident that many mistakes in living could be avoided by purely logical means. They could be avoided, in other words, simply by recognizing the incompatibility of a pattern of acting with a quality of life which is sought by means of such acting. In becoming aware of such incompatibility, we could thereby be saved the needless handicap of acting according to patterns which are incompatible with the quality of living which we desire. In recognizing the unsuitability of a set of conditions as a means for achieving a desired end, we thus could be saved the waste of so much effort in seeking worthy ends by inappropriate means.

One aspect of serious moral philosophy is reflecting about the logical adequacy of presumptions about means for achieving desired ends. This aspect of moral philosophy, in other words, is a consideration of the *warrant* for what is thought about means for achieving desired ends. When it is assumed that a particular means is capable of achieving a desired end, an evaluation is also made about such adequacy. An assumption of this type, however, is sound only if what is thought about the means is also capable of being confirmed by the actual instrumentality of the means for achieving the desired end. In considering the soundness of what we think about the relation between a desired good and the means by which we propose to achieve it, we reflect about a logical relation; and so we take account of something which is other than our own reflecting. We take account rather of the *relation* between two realities about which we reflect: One reality is the desired good, or end, which we seek; and the other reality is what we propose to do in order to achieve it.

One type of reflecting is assuming that a particular means is effective for achieving a desired end. The effectiveness of such a means for achieving what is desired, on the other hand, is not a type of *thinking*. It is rather a property of the means itself for achieving what is desired. A person, for example, may desire health of body and peace of mind, as Epicurus did; and desiring these as the primary goods of life, is a preference for one type of moral end. The actual effectiveness, however, of particular means for achieving such desired health of body and peace of mind, is, on the other hand, a property of what *is* instrumental for achieving them. Hence, there are two very different objects about which such a person reflects. The first is a presumed property of a reality which is other than his thinking; and the second is his own thinking. Only when these two objects are clearly distinguished is a person aware of a basic problem itself in morally earnest reflecting.

Reflecting on the ends which we desire to achieve cannot be divorced from our responsibility to reflect about the means which are capable of achieving these ends, since the effectiveness of means for achieving desired ends is a property of the means themselves, and not of what we think about such means. Every pattern of acting is a means for achieving some quality of life; and the quality of life which can be achieved by a particular pattern of acting, or a particular means, is determined by the conditions which constitute that pattern, or that particular means. We may approve of a pattern of acting when we asume that it is effective for attaining a desired end; but only when we take account of the type of consequences which are likely to accrue from a pattern of acting, do we also reflect upon the warrant itself for assuming that the pattern of acting is *morally* effective.

Even after we have clarified the particular type of end which we esteem as the objective of our lives, we still are faced with a sobering problem of ascertaining the ways which will be capable of bringing about such an end. This is not a technical problem; and it is not a logical problem. It is rather an empirical problem of considering the adequacy of means for achieving desired ends.

We are clear about the general type of moral end which we desire, whether it is called "well-being"; "the enrichment of life"; "the enhancement of life"; "the good life"; or "the abundant life." It may even be called "the greatest good for the greatest number." Whether it is referred to by these particular terms, or by terms such as "living pleasantly," or "living with happiness," the *logical* problem is the same: it is the problem of the *actual effectiveness* of proposed means for achieving the specific end which we desire.

If any statement we may make about a means for achieving an end actually states a way in which such a projected end *can* be achieved, then the *statement* is logically warranted; and its logical warrant is the same type of relation which holds between an inference and a statement which logically implies it. *Specifying* what a person wants as an end of acting is a statement; and in understanding such a statement, we become aware of other statements which are either compatible or incompatible with it.

If we were to think about the consequences which are entailed in any particular pattern of acting, we then would be able to anticipate consequences which are likely to accrue from such a pattern of acting; and such an ability is a reflective achievement, and the type of reflecting by means of which we develop this ability is thinking about the *relation* between a *way* of acting and a *type* of living which is entailed in such acting. Reflecting about the relation between a way of acting and what is entailed in such a way of acting in terms of the quality of living, is reasoning about the warrant for acting in a particular way. In becoming aware of what is entailed in a particular way of acting, we thus have knowledge of the moral significance of a reflected-upon way of acting. Since a particular way of acting is a moral ideal, we thus have a knowledge of the moral soundness of an ideal when we are aware of the consequences which occur in life from living according to such a pattern of life; and only when we have such a knowledge of ideals are we reflectively aware of the justification either for approving or for rejecting them.

CHAPTER V

SEMANTICS AS AN ASPECT OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *A clarification of terms is essential for an intelligible use of language*

Thrasymachus maintains in his discussion of the nature of justice that "The just man always comes out at a *disadvantage* in his relation with the unjust," and in "business dealings . . . the just man never has the *advantage* over the unjust." In paying taxes, for instance, "the just man pays more on equal amounts of property."[1] In maintaining this, Thrasymachus does not talk nonsense, since it is a fact that a person who is honest in business can be taken advantage of by another who is not honest. It likewise is a fact that one person may compute taxes in a way which another person would not; and in doing so, has the *advantage* of paying less than another. What is not so obvious, however, are the meanings of the terms "advantage" and "disadvantage" as Thrasymachus uses them in commenting on these facts. Thrasymachus, like most of us, thinks of advantage in terms of getting something; and he thinks of getting more money than another person as an *advantage,* irrespective of the means by which he gets it.

In regarding advantage from this point of view, he thus does not take account of what a person himself becomes in acting dishonestly. He does not, for example, think of a dishonest business deal as impairing a person's character; and he does not think of a person's scheming to evade taxes as an impairment of his capacity to act honestly. Yet, it is just such consequences which concern Socrates, who believes that dishonest acting is never an advantage, because it reduces a person's sensitivity to moral distinctions. In acting dishonestly, a person becomes less capable of acting honestly; and Socrates' concern with this correlation is uniquely moral, since it is a consideration of the effect of a person's acting upon the quality of human life. Thrasymachus, on the other hand, indicates in no way that he is aware of a correlation between a type of acting and a quality of life; and so he is not concerned with the type of problem with which Socrates is concerned.

Socrates and Thrasymachus differ not only in their attitudes toward the effects of acting upon human life, but also in their use of terms for discussing the significance of such acting. Thrasymachus thinks of cheating, stealing, and lying as "advantageous," because they are means to get financial gains in business dealings and in computing taxes. In maintaining this, he, of course, affirms a fact; since it is a fact that a person who is dishonest can often get more money than a person who is honest, because a person who is honest will not do what a dishonest person does in order to make a dollar. Socrates is as aware of this fact as is Thrasymachus, but he differs from Thrasymachus in the way he evaluates financial gain by dishonest means. He looks upon it as an impairment both of individual and of corporate human life; and so, from his point of view, dishonesty is always disadvantageous. From Thrasymachus' point of view, on the other hand, it is always advantageous.

It is no wonder that with these opposite interpretations of "advantage" and "disadvantage," Socrates and Thrasymachus do not agree on the meaning of "just." Although they both agree that any acting which contributes to the advantage of a person is worthy of praise, they do not agree on what constitutes such acting. Thrasymachus, for instance, maintains that a person who is skillful enough to evade paying taxes is to be envied, because by evading such payments, he has more money to spend for other things. In maintaining this, he is very close to some of the facts; although he does not, of course, take account of other facts, such as Socrates does. Socrates thinks of what takes place in men's character when they use their intelligence to cheat in business and to defraud the state. He is also impressed with what takes place in the state in which fraudulent practices are looked upon by people as "advantageous."

Socrates and Thrasymachus neither agree upon the nature of justice nor upon the nature of the just person; and so the language which each of them uses has vastly different meanings. What Thrasymachus regards as "advantageous," and so as worth desiring, is what Socrates looks upon as "disadvantageous," because a handicap to human life. Thus because they do not agree on what is worth desiring, they do not agree on the meanings of terms with which they speak about moral distinctions.

We ordinarily think that "just" is the critical word in this dialogue, since both Thrasymachus and Socrates endeavor to define it as the primary objective of their discussion; but actually, this is not the critical term in this particular discussion. It is "advantage"; and until the term "advantage" is clarified, the term "just" cannot be clarified, because "just" and "unjust" are defined by Thrasymachus and Socrates in terms of "advantage" and "disadvantage." Since both men differ in what they regard as advantageous and disadvantageous, it is not surprising that they also differ in what they regard as "just" and "unjust"; and so they likewise differ in the ways in which they use these terms.

This is an instructive lesson, because it makes us aware that we cannot understand the definition of a term unless we also understand the terms with which it is defined. It is no wonder that the discussion between Socrates and Thrasymachus brought about Socrates' question: "What do you mean?" When Thrasymachus declared that "The *advantage* of the stronger is . . . just," Socrates was again forced to ask: "But what in the world do you mean by this?"[2] In asking for this clarification, Socrates insists upon the need to clarify the language of philosophy itself.

A basic condition for philosophical discussions is thus formulated by Socrates when he says: "I only want you to make your meaning plainer."[3] Clarifying the meaning of language for the purpose of conveying ideas is the semantic aspect of philosophy, which is as ancient as philosophy itself.

We become aware of the justification for a semantic consideration when we take account of any word which is central to a serious discussion, as for example, the word "right," which is always central to discussions about moral distinctions. The word "right" is used in so many ways that it is often difficult to understand what people mean when they speak of "right." "Right" commonly means "correct," or "the correct thing to do." Yet, it is evident that if the meaning of the term "right" is "correct," in the sense of socially established practice, then the sole moral problem in reflecting on the nature of right would be ascertaining what is already socially established practice.

The word "right," of course, is also commonly used with meanings other than "socially established." It is used, for example, in speaking about "natural rights," the meaning of which expression is anything but clear, since the term "natural" is itself one of the most ambiguous of all commonly used words.

We are confused about many things; but none of us is so confused that he mistakes "social" and "natural" rights with a moral criterion by which he evaluates these so-called "rights." We use the word "right" both to refer to a *legally* authorized way of acting, and also to a standard of what we think *should* be authorized. We thus make a clear moral distinction when we maintain that a particular way of acting which is permitted by law *should not* be permitted. In thinking of a way of acting which "should" be permitted as "right," in distinction to what is permitted by law as "right," we use the moral concept "should" to define the moral meaning of "right." The expression "should" has a uniquely moral meaning, however, only when it implies a distinction between what is a fact, and what a person believes would be more contributory to human benefit than such a fact. In speaking about "the *rights* of people," for instance, we consider a morally significant criterion only when we use the term "rights" with a uniquely moral meaning. In thinking, however, about the uniquely moral meaning of "rights," we think about what "should be," or "ought to be"; and the meaning of what "ought to be" entails obligation.

Thrasymachus, for example, does not think of "justice" as the moral obligation of "giving to every person whatever is his right." When "justice," however, is defined in terms of "giving to every person whatever is his right," the critical term is "right." Hence the term "right" must be clarified before the term "justice" can be clarified; and the terms with which "right" is defined must, in turn, convey a moral distinction; otherwise the term "right" will not have a *moral* meaning.

A person must supply a moral distinction as the meaning of a term before the term itself can have moral significance for him, and this is not a matter merely of learning language. It is dependent rather on having a moral sensitivity. No person, for example, can contrast the moral significance of a world community for human well-being with the fact of a great number of sovereign states, unless he is already aware of a benefit for mankind which would be entailed in a world community *if* the sovereignty of individual countries were replaced by another consideration. The significance for human life of an international government cannot be comprehended when such a government is thought of entirely in terms of sovereign states. A person cannot even think that a particular country *should* have its sovereignty superseded by another authority for the well-being of mankind unless he takes account of something more than the well-being of the people of a particular country. The moral *rights of mankind* constitute a different reality from the rights of the people of *a* country; and thinking about such *rights of mankind* is itself a profound moral achievement.

2. *A clarification of terms is a semantic condition for communicating ideas*

What is said about moral "right," however, cannot be clearly understood unless a person knows to which "right" the reference is made. Every clearly worded contract, for example, consists of specified rights. Hence, a person who understands a contract to which he is a party, understands what he is entitled to by virtue of such a contract. These specified rights are guaranteed by law; and securing them is a matter entirely of *legal* procedure. Such legal procedure, however, is not the only means by which *moral* rights can be secured. In fact, the most significant of moral rights cannot be secured by legal means. A child, for example, has a moral right to his parents' love; and such love cannot be secured by legal means. Legal procedure can secure neither a parent's good will for a child nor a parent's willingness to devote his life to his child's welfare. What is morally most significant in creating the conditions in which a child comes to his maturity cannot be secured by *legal* procedure; and providing such conditions for a child is almost entirely a *moral* matter outside the scope of law. It is what a parent wants to do as the fulfillment of his role as a morally responsible parent; and wanting such conditions for a child is an element in the moral role of parenthood, in distinction to the legal considerations of parenthood. Courts of law can secure sufficient food and sufficient shelter for a child, but they cannot secure for a child what is its most important moral right—the love of a parent.

Only as a legal right, therefore, is distinguished from a moral right, which cannot be secured by legal means, is a person able to understand the moral responsibility which is entailed in being a morally responsible parent. A child has moral rights in relation to his parents, but he in turn has no commensurate duties to his parents which constitute the parents' rights in relation to him. Yet, every *legal* contract specifies rights and duties which can be secured by legal means. The rights, however, to which a child is entitled in relation to his parents are no clearer to parents than are their capacities to love their child. Thus the most important aspect of a parent's love for his child can be understood only by a person who is devoted to his child's welfare, so that he wants above all else to understand what the child *needs* of him.

Yet, when so stated, this sounds like philosophical Egoism; since according to Egoism, there is only one moral consideration, and this is the rights to which a person himself is entitled. A child, however, it must be pointed out, does not reflect on his rights. Only adults are capable of doing this, and neither the term "right" nor the term "duty" has any more moral meaning in reflecting than it is given by the person who uses it. A person, for instance, may use these terms entirely as legal language. That is, he may think of them as two aspects of a contract; and he may think of such a contract as a mutual agreement, the enforcement of which is a matter of legal procedure. But in thinking of "right" and "duty" exclusively in this framework, he uses a vocabulary whose meaning is exclusively legal, and not uniquely moral. Only as a person thinks of rights as opportunities to which another person is entitled by virtue of *his* needs or *his* capacities to take advantage of them for the enrichment of *his* life, does he think of rights as *moral* rights. And only as he thinks of rights with this moral meaning, will he also think of duties as *moral* responsibilities. The moral responsibilities of a person are defined for him by others' moral rights. The moral responsibilities of a parent to his children, for instance, are defined for him by what his children need for the development of their capacities to achieve the greatest possible enrichment of *their* lives.

The particular responsibilities which parents *can* discharge are, of course, limited to their capacities and their resources. Moral discourse is always about what *can* be done. Hence the responsibilities of parents to their children must consequently be considered within the scope of what parents can do; and what parents can do is the moral problem of parents, a clarification of which problem may well constitute a task for a parent's entire life-time.

A parent who does less than he can to help his children become aware of the rich things which are available to them for engaging their interests does less than he morally can do. In challenging a person with this type of obligation to children, we do not think of the rights of which children are assured by law. We think rather of the rights which are children's capacities to enrich their lives when they can take advantage of whatever will contribute to the enhancement of their lives. In thinking of such rights to which children are entitled by virtue of their capacities, a person thinks of moral responsibilities. Any person, therefore, who is capable, or could become capable, of helping another person enter into an enrichment of life, is *morally* responsible for doing what he can for that person; and such responsibility is no more a matter of law than are the capacities themselves which a person has to attain an enrichment of life.

People regard laws as morally "right" when they look upon themselves as morally responsible for conforming to them. The word "right" in this single statement is obviously used with different senses. When a law is respected as "right," it is thought of as being what a law *should* be. That is, it is thought of as a standard of what people should do. When, however, laws are thought of as moral standards, a problem arises how such moral standards of "right" can be morally more demanding upon individuals than are the laws themselves which they respect as normative. Laws, for example, which prevent parents from "neglecting" their children, are looked upon by some parents as the very norms of what parents should do; and such parents would be satisfied that they are "law abiding," and so "good parents" when they do what is required of them by law.

3. *A clarification of terms is essential to a critical philosophy*

Stating the sense with which the term "good" is used in moral discourse is a semantic procedure; whereas the aspect of human life to which this term refers in specifically moral discourse is not a semantic distinction, but is rather a *moral* distinction. If, for example, a person does not distinguish between the two uses of the term "good" in speaking about a "good parent" and a "good paint," then he is unaware of a uniquely moral meaning of the term "good." In being aware of the moral meaning of the term "good," when one speaks of a "good parent," or a "good man," one understands the use of the term "good" for taking a specifically moral distinction; and understanding this distinction is defining the term in a way which differentiates the expression, "good man," from the expression, "good paint."

Unless a person first clarifies a vocabulary, he cannot even ask an intelligible question. Asking, for example, whether a man's act is "good," presupposes that a person understands the sense of the term "good" in evaluating a human act. If this assumption is unwarranted, because the specifically moral sense of the term "good" is not clear to such a person, then an answer to the question cannot be more significant, as an expression of morally serious discourse, than is the intelligibility of the question itself. The *intelligibility* of the question, however, is purely a semantic consideration. That is, it is a matter entirely of using language with an awareness of its meaning.

One elementary semantic rule is that the meaning of a question must be understood before an intelligible answer can be given to it. The question, for example, "What is good?," is not intelligible; and it cannot be answered intelligently until a person first understands what specifically is being asked. If what is being asked for is an enumeration of all the things to which reference is commonly made by the term "good," then an answer to this question would require a knowledge of something entirely outside the scope of language, and so entirely outside any strictly semantic considerations. If, on the other hand, what is asked for, is a clarification of the *word* "good," then the question is for a procedure which comes within the scope of semantics.

Language, unfortunately, is often used without understanding, because it is used without a clarification of its meaning in a particular context. In the particular context of *moral* distinctions, for example, the term "good" must be used with a moral meaning; and understanding what constitutes such meaning is a condition for intelligently using the term "good" in discourse about moral distinctions. A question such as, "What is good in itself?," is, for instance, misleading; and a person would not even ask it if he were to think clearly about the meaning of the term "good" in a specifically *moral* context.

A moral context consists of human life and of all that affects the quality of human life. Whatever contributes to the enrichment of the quality of human life, or contributes to the development of the capacities of human beings for the enhancement of life, has a moral significance which may be referred to as "good." But whatever is so designated is *in relation* to human life. Hence if "good" is used in this sense, there is no such thing as a moral good which is "good in itself." [4] Whatever may be referred to as "a moral good," is thus always *in relation* to life. The question, consequently, "What is good in itself?," must be criticized on semantic grounds, since the term "good" has a morally significant meaning only in referring to what affects the character of human beings, or the quality of human life; and so it is morally significant only *in relation* to human life.

According to some philosophers, the term "good" is the "primitive" term in moral discourse, in the sense that its meaning cannot be clarified by other terms. According to them, it is, therefore, *the* sole term by means of which all other morally significant terms can be given morally significant meaning. In specifying this, they affirm a rule of procedure, which indeed is debatable; and in contesting it, a person objects to their assumption that there is one, and only one term, which is capable of performing the role of a primitive term. Professor Moore, for example, maintains as a *semantic* dogma: "That which is meant by 'good' is, in fact, except its converse, 'bad,' the *only* simple object of thought which is peculiar to Ethics." [5]

The term "good," it is here argued, can be dispensed with, without in any way ignoring the basic aspect of human life which constitutes the subject matter of moral philosophy. In discourse about moral distinctions, for instance, we say: "The morally praiseworthy is good." But we might just as well say: "The good is morally praiseworthy." In the first case, the expression, "morally praiseworthy," is defined in terms of "good." In the second case, it is the converse. In both instances, of course, the statements must be regarded as definitions. That is, they must be looked upon as stipulations of the ways in which words are used; and specifying that the word "good" is used with the meaning, "morally praiseworthy," we define the term "good" by means of other words whose *moral* meaning must, of course, also be understood.

A *morally* significant term cannot be understood without understanding a *morally* significant distinction with which it is defined. It is this point which Professor Moore makes, but he maintains that *the* term which has *the* unique moral significance is "good"; and it is this arbitrary selection of the term "good" which is here questioned.

It is questioned not only on the grounds of semantic theory, but also on grounds of common practice, since we use terms, such as "ought" and "right," with the same sense with which we use the word "good." In saying that "An act is good," we mean that it ought to be; or that it has a nature such that "It is right that it should be." Thousands of things affect the quality of our lives, and do so in ways which we call "good," and in ways which we regard as having a *right* to be so classified, because they are capable of enriching life and enhancing our capacities for living. In being capable of enriching our lives, they thus impose upon us *obligations* to select them in preference to other things which cannot enrich our lives in equal measure. In common usage, therefore, we refer to a vast range of realities as "good"; and in so doing, we use this term with the moral meaning of "ought" or "obligation."

So long as a person may live, his moral obligation to himself is developing his capacities to enrich his experiences. A person is also under obligations to those whose lives he can affect by what he does to help them to cultivate their capacities for achieving an enrichment of life. When we think of the vast range of things which are morally significant by virtue of their actual or potential effects upon the quality of human life, we are aware that the definite article is incorrectly used in speaking about "*the* good." If, however, the expression, "the good," is used to refer to the totality of things which are capable of contributing to the enrichment of life, then this expression does have an intelligible meaning, although its meaning is not very helpful in a moral philosophy which endeavors to avoid as many abstractions as possible.

In criticizing this abstraction, "*the* good," on the grounds of common practice, we reaffirm a criticism which Aristotle directs against some philosophies. Aristotle maintains that moral philosophy is one of the *practical* aspects of reflective life; and for this reason, it should not include terms which may be serviceable only in a "speculative" philosophy. Although, as has been pointed out, there is no clear-cut distinction between practical and theoretical philosophies, there is, nevertheless, a semantic difference, and so a practical difference, in the vocabularies which are used in practical and in theoretical philosophies. For the purpose of clarifying distinctions which we make in our practice, we should not, therefore, import a vocabulary into our moral philosophy which is not helpful for understanding our practice.

4. *The vocabulary of a moral philosophy is meaningful only by virtue of empirical considerations*

Every distinction which is morally significant has bearing upon the quality of human life, and so is empirically meaningful. The vocabulary, therefore, of a moral philosophy should consist of terms whose meaningful character is measured by empirical criteria. The expression, "good in itself," for example, is meaningless in an empirical moral philosophy. A moral good is in relation to human life; and speaking about a moral good as "absolute," or as having a character "in itself," is affirming a property of it which is without *moral* significance.[6] Whatever is morally good is in relation to human life precisely because its property of goodness is its peculiar *relation* to human life.

Language in an empirical moral philosophy refers to distinctions in the quality of human life, or in the aspects of conduct as they affect the quality of human life. Although the term "loyalty," for example, is meaningful in an empirical moral philosophy, the statement, "Loyalty to our best self, demands that our best self be really good," is purely verbal; and as such is empirically vacuous.[7] Nothing is said in this statement about the nature of loyalty. After being told that loyalty "demands that our best self be really good," we know nothing about the meaning of the expression, "loyalty to our best self." What we want to know, however, is the meaning of this expression; and such meaning is not provided in this circular statement. Yet, entirely apart from this criticism, the statement is a source of bewilderment rather than of clarification, since it is impossible to ascertain what is referred to by the expression, "our best self." Does this refer to a fact, or to a norm? That is, is this expression used with a "factual" meaning, or with a "normative" meaning? Does it refer to what we are, or to an ideal of what we should become? And unless we know the referent of this expression, it is impossible for us to understand this.

A statement in which words are used only to refer to other words is without *moral* significance, since it does not refer to distinctions in life of which we endeavor to take account. The assertion, for example, "Man's first duty is to see his real duty clearly and truly" is such an empirically vacuous statement.[8] Although grammatically correct, it is without moral significance, because it does not clarify the nature of duty, or moral responsibility. We are aware, of course, that there is no *first* duty in morally serious life; and it is completely arbitrary to classify any detail of a complex life as the *first* responsibility. Singling out a responsibility as "*the* first" is comparable to maintaining that air is *the* most important element in the metabolism of life. We know that there would be no life without hundreds of factors. There likewise is no morally earnest life apart from a vast complex of responsibilities. Speaking, therefore, about "man's *first* duty" in terms of "his *real* duty," is purely verbal. Every duty is real; and there are many such duties, any one of which is essential to morally serious living.

A statement about "man's first duty" in terms of "his real duty" clarifies nothing about the nature of duty. It merely increases expressions whose moral significance we should like to understand. We should like to understand what is the nature of duty as an aspect of morally serious life. We are, however, told nothing of its nature in this statement. On the grounds of this poverty of informative significance, this statement, therefore, is as trivial as every purely verbal statement. Although it conforms to the rules of grammar, it does not qualify as *morally* meaningful, according to the criterion of meaning in an empirical moral philosophy.

The expression, "*the* moral problem," is likewise empirically vacuous.[9] There is no such thing as "*the* moral problem." There are many moral problems. Whatever affects the quality of life is a moral problem; and there are innumerable factors which affect the quality of human life.

Although the expression, "the fittest," may well be meaningful in biology, it is without such meaning in discourse on moral distinctions. In Darwin's vocabulary, for example, it refers to forms of life which survive; and as referring to what takes place, it has empirical significance, but it in no way includes a consideration of the *right* to survive. Its empirical meaning thus does not include a moral evaluation; and yet, this expression is often used in moral philosophies as if it refers to a moral norm.

"The survival of the fittest" may be an unambiguous expression in the discourse of a biologist, although it is anything but clear in the discourse of a moral philosopher. A moral philosopher considers not only what is, or what may be described as facts; but he also considers what ought to be, or has a right to be. In reflecting, therefore, on the survival of one human life rather than another, a morally serious person thinks of the *right* of such life to survive. A distinction of this type is commonly made in our reflecting on human life. We are, for instance, "morally indignant" that a person who uses every possible unscrupulous means in business may outlast his competitors. That he survives is a fact; but that he is morally "fit" to survive economically or financially is a very different matter. We, nevertheless, often hear in the most pious of language that a person has what he has because he is "fit" to have it, or "has the ability to get it." And not too infrequently, what a person has acquired, even by the most reprehensible of means, is cited as evidence that he must be regarded as "fit" in order to have acquired so much. We indeed are confused in using the expression, "the fit," or "the fittest," because we confuse a terminology which is clear in one discourse with a terminology which is not clear in another discourse.

We create a profound problem, which is basically semantic, when we carry over a terminology, for instance, from biology into moral philosophy. We do not, of course, carry over moral distinctions from biology into morality, but we commonly use a terminology which is used without moral significance in biology, as if it had moral significance. This type of confusion is evident in a statement in the *Republic* in which Plato declares: "One man is *naturally* fitted for one task." [10] This statement, however, is meaningless until it is specified what is meant by "natural." Yet, many people appeal to "nature" itself as *the* moral criterion, and assume that in referring to "nature," they refer to a criterion whose meaning is clear. There is, unfortunately, no such clarity of meaning which is associated with this word. It means almost anything. We say that the physically fit survive "in nature"; whereas we say that it is "human nature" to help the physically unfit to survive. We say that whereas the rule of survival "in nature" is "tooth and claw," the rule of "human nature" is "love thy neighbor." But what do we mean by the word "nature" in these statements? We say that it is against "nature" for a mother to forsake her young. Yet, this is a practice "in nature." Just which aspect of nature are we then referring to when we maintain that what is "natural" is "right"? We know that the preying mantis devours her mate; and we know that male bees are disposed of by other bees in the same hive. All of this takes place "in nature," and is referred to as "natural." We cannot help wonder, therefore, just what is meant by the term "natural" when it is used as a term referring to a moral criterion. We say that a particular form of behavior is "unnatural"; and we say this with an apparent confidence that we are saying something which is morally meaningful. Yet, it is a fact that every form of behavior which is classified with "moral" indignation as "unnatural" is practiced in "nature."

Arguing that a particular practice "is good *because* it is 'natural,' or bad *because* it is 'unnatural,' " is, therefore, fallacious.[11] There is, however, not only a logical consideration which is involved in arguing moral defensibility by citing "nature." There is also a semantic consideration. We cannot, in fact, even say that the argument is "fallacious" until we know what is meant by the term "nature"; and the meaning of this term is not clearly given in this common argument. If the term "natural" were to designate that which morally ought to be, then any practice which can be described as "natural" would indeed be "good," or morally worthy of approval. The term "natural," however, does not specifically refer to such a moral norm, since it is used with an almost inexhaustible number of meanings. Hence it is ambiguous; and for this reason, the term "natural" is not meaningful in morally serious discourse until it is clarified.

Another term which is commonly used in moral philosophies is "self-realization." But again, we must ask: "What does this expression mean?" Even if we mean by "self-realization," the development of "self," we still have not clarified the critical word "self." If we do not clearly understand the meaning of the term "self," we can hardly be clear about the meaning of the expression, "self-realization," let alone be clear about the all-too-commonly used term, "self-expression." Many of us, nevertheless, think that we affirm something significant when we declare that "self-expression is the inalienable right of human life." Few of us, if any, know just what is meant by "inalienable," as it is commonly used.

There is scarcely a person who does not use the term "progress" as if he were completely aware of its meaning. Many of us, possibly most of us, speak of the great "progress" made in the last century, or in the last decade, or even in the last year. We hear every day on the television and on the radio about the new inventions of supersonic missiles and rockets which can be shot from one continent to another, and can be directed with ever-increasing accuracy for the purpose of annihilating cities. The "progress" made in devising means for destroying more and more life, however, is seldom thought of in terms of a *moral* criterion.

As one of the criteria of progress, we are told of the possibility of traveling to any spot on the earth within two hours. Few, however, wonder what they would do if they should get there, or what they would do while flying there. Yet, among an agitated form of life in which mobility is a primary criterion of concern, it is not surprising that the term "progress" is used without a shred of *moral* meaning. Progress is commonly thought of as something worth desiring; although little consideration is given to what is meant when we think of what makes a change "worth desiring." One slips into speaking about "progress" as "advancement"; and yet, the moment he reflects, he becomes aware that he uses the term "advancement" without even thinking of the criterion by which "advancement" is measured. If, however, anyone should believe that the meaning of progress or advancement is synonymous with history, he need only remember that primitive Kaffirs impose upon themselves the prohibition not to starve an enemy; and by the criterion of these primitive men, we cannot help wonder what the progress of so-called "civilized" men means.

Chapter VI

THE EMPIRICAL ASPECT OF SEMANTIC CONSIDERATIONS IN A MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *Semantic considerations in a moral philosophy entail extra-linguistic problems*

Even after a person has carefully defined the terms in a moral philosophy, he is still confronted with problems which cannot be resolved by semantic procedures. Semantic procedures consist of clarifying language distinctions; whereas the language of a moral philosophy is used also for analyzing aspects of human life which are not language distinctions.

Language is one aspect of human life; and a critical analysis of it constitutes a philosophy of language, which is commonly referred to as "philosophical semantics." An analysis of morality as an aspect of human life, on the other hand, constitutes the subject matter of moral philosophy. Moral distinctions are not distinctions in language; although language is a means with which such distinctions become topics for philosophical analysis.

Dewey, for instance, points out a significant fact in semantics when he maintains that "Right is only an abstract *name* for the multitude of concrete demands in action which others impress upon us, and of which we are obliged, if we would live, to take some account." [1] Although he refers to the *term* "right," what he says about its meaning, refers to something other than language. It refers to the "concrete demands in action" with which a person is confronted in his social relations. These demands are facts; and a serious analysis of the nature of human life must take account of them. The very nature of a social context in which an individual lives consists in large part of such "demands," and there is nothing abstract about their character. The meaning of the *term* "right" is an abstraction only in the sense that it can be considered apart from "concrete demands." The morally significant referent of this term, however, cannot be considered apart from "the multitude of concrete demands in action" with which a person is confronted in his social contexts.

Associating the *concept* of a "multitude of concrete demands in action" with the term "right" is a rule of language usage, and so is a semantic procedure. Thus in clarifying the sense of the term "right," we need take account of nothing more than the *concept* of such demands; whereas in reflecting on the *moral* significance of this term, we take account of actual demands. If we were to use this term, therefore, without referring to "concrete demands," we would need to consider nothing but the concept or the idea of such demands. Yet, when we confine the meaning of this term to such a strict conceptual significance, it has no *moral* significance. That is, although it is helpful for making distinctions in our language, it is not helpful for taking account of the actual context in which we live. Concern for such a context in which we live is an interest in something very different from our reflecting on our concepts, although what we think about such demands is our concept of them. Yet, what we *think* about such demands does not constitute the "concrete" demands. It constitutes only the scope of our awareness of them.

When we are convinced that there are things which are capable of benefiting human life when they are used in some ways, and are capable of impairing human life when they are used in other ways, we become aware that the distinctions which we indicate by the terms "good" and "evil" are not entirely matters of language usage. We may indeed be mistaken in classifying many things as "evil," because we mistakenly think they are adverse to human well-being. But such mistakes in our classifying do not alter the fact that there are things which actually are adverse to human well-being, whereas there are other things which actually can contribute to human well-being. Any person, however, who believes that whatever affects human life, either favorably or unfavorably, is determined entirely by thought, believes that the primary object of serious reflecting is ideas or concepts. Any person, however, who believes that we act in concrete social and physical contexts, also believes that there are ways of acting which bring about different consequences in such concrete contexts. One way of acting brings about one type of consequence; and another way of acting brings about another type of consequence. One type of consequence affects the quality of human life in one way, whereas another type of consequence affects it in another way.

A consequence of acting which impairs human well-being is a fact, and may be classified as an "evil." Selecting the term "evil" for such a classification is, of course, arbitrary. Yet, what is not arbitrary is the fact that there is an aspect of acting which actually is detrimental to well-being. The term "well-being" is likewise an arbitrary *term;* but any person who believes that there are qualities of life which he should like to avoid, and other qualities of life which he earnestly desires, is aware of basic distinctions about which moral philosophies have traditionally been concerned. Patterns of acting which are not wanted, because they are believed to entail consequences which are detrimental to the quality of life, are referred to as "evil," or "bad."

These terms are, of course, heavily freighted with emotion; and in using them, we must be aware of the fact that they are in part emotive. This fact, however, should not loom so large in our reflecting on the vocabulary of moral philosophies that we regard the entire vocabulary of moral philosophies as purely expressive or emotive.

Notwithstanding the fact that many terms which are used in speaking about moral distinctions are expressive or emotive, it is also a fact that they can be used in ways which take account of their emotive overtones. Hence we need not dismiss them as having no significance whatever other than emotive. Regarding all terms which are used in morally earnest discourse as exclusively emotive, or expressive, is not an empirical procedure. It is rather a procedure which is logically entailed in the dogmatic premise that all terms which are used for making moral distinctions are emotive. It logically follows from this dogmatic premise that the terms "right," "wrong," "good," and "ought," refer to no "fact," or factual aspect in human adjustment. This point of view is taken by some Logical Positivists, who maintain that the sole function of such terms is expressing feeling, and so is expressive, or emotive.

When, however, it is maintained that every term which is used for affirming a moral distinction is emotive, it also follows that every term in the vocabulary of a moral philosophy is devoid of factual significance. Yet, according to the point of view of this book, the meanings of critical terms in an intelligently thought-out moral philosophy are "factual" when they refer to aspects of human life, or refer to "facts" in the contexts in which men live.

A conviction which underlies the major part of the history of moral philosophy is that the terms "right" and "good," for instance, refer to realities which are as "factual" as are the realities to which the vocabulary of physical sciences refer. The realities referred to in moral philosophies are not, of course, the realities which are studied in some of the specialized sciences; but this fact constitutes no disparagement of the vocabulary of moral philosophy. Every critical discipline has a vocabulary whose meanings constitute the language of *that* particular discipline. The term "cell," for instance, is of no more significance in a definition of the term "right" or "ought" than is the term "right" or "ought" of significance in defining the term "cell." A biologist, therefore, who would insist that his vocabulary is the *only* meaningful one for all scientific discourse would show how limited his knowledge is of his own field, to say nothing of other fields. So likewise, anyone who would insist that the terms "good," "right," and "ought" are morally meaningful outside the scope of moral distinctions, would show that he understood nothing of the unique character of the distinctions which constitute the scope of morally serious reflecting.

2. *A clarification of critical terms in a moral philosophy includes empirical considerations*

The term "obligation," for example, refers to a type of relation in human life in which an individual is capable of doing something for the enhancement of life, either his own, or another's. It thus refers to a reality which is other than language; and in light of this fact, it confronts us with considerations that are not confined to language. A person's capacity to act in a way which is capable of enhancing the quality of human life actually imposes a moral responsibility upon him by virtue of having such a capacity. A person's moral responsibility is thus a matter of his ability to act in a way which is capable of affecting life beneficially.

What is significant in this analysis is not the meaning of the term "beneficial," but rather the meaning of the term "responsibility"; and this meaning cannot be considered without also taking account of the capacity of human life to enrich the quality of human life. In this consideration, we are not primarily concerned with *stating* our interpretation of this capacity; but we are concerned rather with *interpreting* this capacity. Our primary concern is the *fact* that there is such a capacity; and if we believed that there were no such capacity, we would not be interested in assuming that there is. We might consider the fiction of such a capacity; but we would not seriously think about a *moral* responsibility which is entailed by virtue of having such a capacity. The capacity to fabricate fictions is not the capacity of which a person seriously thinks when he reflects about *moral* responsibility.

Moral responsibility is entailed by virtue of a capacity to act in a way which actually *can* alter the quality of life; and such an effect upon life is brought about in a unique relation. It is a relation in which a person is confronted with an opportunity to contribute to the enrichment of life. Moral responsibility, so defined, is not a matter of constraint which is imposed upon a person. It is rather an opportunity to act in a way which a person accepts; and in accepting it, he imposes a constraint upon himself. It is his own decision to act in a way which he believes will bring about the benefit of which he is aware.

We do not think about the meaning of the expression, "moral obligation," without also thinking about a capacity to act in a way which we consider to be effective for bringing about a benefit to life. We are not concerned here with which particular instance of acting *is* actually worthy of such consideration, but we are interested in the fact that we are aware of our capacity to act in a way which is beneficial; and it is this awareness which is included in the very meaning of the term "obligation." The term "obligation," or "responsibility," as it is used in a moral philosophy, always entails a reference to a relation between a person who is aware of his own capacity to act, and what he is able to do which he regards as worth doing. In thinking about the meaning of these terms, we, therefore, think about a capacity to act which is not confined to using language.

Morally meaningful terms denote morally significant relations; and such relations are not matters of language. The meanings of morally significant terms, such as "obligation" and "responsibility," are likewise not determined by what is thought about language, but about types of *relations*. A relation which comprehends only aspects of an individual's own life is reflected upon in a philosophical egoism. A philosophical altruism, on the other hand, takes account of a relation between an individual and other human beings. Hence there is no common ground between these two types of philosophy in considering the nature of moral responsibility. A person who thinks only of his own well-being, thinks of moral responsibility only in relation to himself.

The vocabulary of a philosophical egoism need not, however, be restricted to the bias of philosophical solipsism. An egoist may be perfectly aware that there are other persons in relation to whom he lives, even though he is not *concerned* with their well-being, except as it affects his own. From his point of view, their well-being is secondary to his own, since he thinks of it only as instrumental to his own well-being.

We presuppose a moral philosophy in what we consider to be the subject matter of moral philosophy. In other words, we have a moral philosophy when we state the meaning of a critical term in reflecting on moral distinctions.

A moral philosophy expresses what a person regards as "most worth doing"; and in clarifying this expression, a person formulates his moral philosophy. In maintaining, for example, that a person "ought" to do what is "most worth doing," a person thinks of obligation in terms of what he regards as "most worth doing"; and so in formulating an altruistic philosophy, a person thinks of the meaning of this expression in terms of opportunities for benefiting others. A person, on the other hand, who does not consider another's life as a matter of what is *most* important, would not formulate a moral philosophy in which the meaning of the terms "obligation" and "responsibility" refer to another person's life as of *primary* concern.

As has already been pointed out, the term "obligation" is ambiguous, although the fact of its ambiguity is not the issue which is being discussed. What is being discussed is the *fact* that whatever the meaning of the term may be for whomever uses it, its meaning is conditioned by his own moral philosophy. What a person regards as the scope of *his* concern, is also the scope of his morally serious reflecting.

One type of moral philosophy is being concerned with another person's well-being, because such well-being is in turn beneficial to oneself. A radically different philosophy is being concerned with another person's well-being as beneficial to that other person. Two moral philosophies may, therefore, use the same vocabulary; and yet every word in their vocabularies may have radically different meanings. The basis for this difference is not linguistic, but moral. It is what a person thinks about the extent of human life for which he considers himself to be "responsible," or of which he believes he "ought to take account," or as having the "right" to be considered.

The term "ought" has different meanings in different philosophies; but whenever it is used, it has a basic core of meaning. It always means a requirement. Insofar as we think about any reality in terms of "ought," we in some way think of what we *should* do, if we were to act. In looking at a work of art in a museum, for example, we are aware that we may do nothing to alter it. Yet, when we say that it "should be" this or that, we think of it in terms of what we would do if we were permitted to do so. When we pass an aesthetic judgment in terms of the word "ought," the meaning of "ought" has a core of moral meaning. We use it with the conviction that if it were within our *rights*, we should do what we believe would enhance the artistic character of the object we evaluate. Even though a person may think that a museum picture would be artistically improved by an alteration which he could make, he does not, however, presume that he has a right to make such a change. Yet, insofar as he thinks of the alternatives as something which *should* be done for aesthetic reasons, he thinks of what he would do if he were permitted to do it, and so were "able" to do it.

The word "able" in this particular analysis is, of course, ambiguous, because it may be used both in reflecting about the *moral* significance of potential acting, and also about acting which is not morally significant. Anyone may physically be able to damage a work of art; but anyone who has this ability, and does not use it, because he is aware of the rights of others to enjoy such an object, thinks of the range of his ability in terms of a morally meaningful distinction. Anyone, on the other hand, who thinks of the meaning of the word "able" only in terms of his physical capacities, uses the word without moral meaning; and he does so, because he does not consider what he is physically able to do within limits which are not physical, that he himself imposes upon his own acting. When a person refrains from mutilating a museum piece, for example, because he thinks he may be apprehended by guards and so penalized, he considers only what he is *physically* able to do in terms of physical restraint; and insofar as this is the extent of a person's consideration, his moral philosophy—if he were to formulate one—would consist of a vocabulary in which the terms "right," "responsibility," and "ought" have meanings which are commensurate with what he is *physically* "able to do." If a person is incapable of thinking of anything but physically imposed restraints, the meaning of the terms "ought," "right," and "responsibility" are likewise thought of only in terms of physical restraints. It may not be unfair to suppose that the term "ought" has fundamentally no other meaning than this for the late Moritz Schlick, when he says: "The desire of another, directed upon me, is described as an ought only when that person is able to add pressure to his desire and thus to reward fulfillment and to punish neglect." [2]

When the *primary* consideration of which a person takes account in acting in relation to another person is the effect of his own acting upon the quality of another's life, then he also thinks of *his* responsibility in terms of what he is able to do for the benefit of the other person. In so thinking about what he is "able to do," he thinks of his physical capacities in terms of what he believes he *ought* to do. A person who does not think of the priority of another's life as establishing what he himself is "able to do," will not, however, use the expression, "able to do," as it is used by those who think of such priority.

The term "conscience" is another critical term in morally serious reflecting. Yet, the definition of this term is not *morally* meaningful unless a morally unique aspect of human life is considered. Just what is morally unique, however, in the aspect of life which is referred to by the term "conscience" is a basic problem in all philosophies in which this term is used. Epictetus, for example, interprets conscience as "the law of reason within"; but just what is referred to by the expression, "the law of reason within," is an empirical problem. It is the problem of what *is* this so-called "law of reason within." And the aspect of human life which is denoted by the expression, "the law of reason within," is the *morally* significant consideration in reflecting about Stoic moral philosophy. Understanding how a term is used is of no particular moral significance unless such understanding also enables us to understand something of the nature of human life; and we are enabled to understand something of human life only if the defining expression such as, "the law of reason within," enables us to take account of an actual aspect of human life.

All morally earnest reflecting is concerned with understanding human life; and it is not concerned primarily with the way in which terms are defined in moral philosophies. Only when moral philosophies, therefore, include terms which enlighten us about human life are our philosophies themselves *morally* significant. Thus, if there is such a thing as "the law of reason within," then the Stoics do contribute to our enlightenment by drawing our attention to the *fact* that there is such a reality. Hence, the Stoics' contribution to our enlightenment is no more significant than is their clarification of the *empirical* or *factual* meaning of this expression which they use to define the term "conscience."

The same thing may be said in regards to any other word or expression with which the term "conscience" is defined. In defining conscience as "the law of God implanted in the human heart," Abelard, for example, shifts morally serious concern from the term "conscience," to the expression, "the law of God implanted in the human heart." Abelard's particular use of language in this case is, of course, a semantic procedure, although our understanding of this language as morally meaningful is not only a semantic procedure. It is rather comprehending the nature of what Abelard designates by the expression, "the law of God implanted in the human heart."[3]

From Abelard's point of view, there is no aspect of human life which *should* be referred to by the term "conscience" unless it is "the law of God implanted in the human heart"; and according to him, if there is no such reality, there likewise is no "conscience." His concern, therefore, is not primarily semantical. It is rather factual. It is not primarily with stating a verbal clarificaton of another verbal expression. It is rather with the *fact* that there is such a reality as is referred to by the expression, "the law of God implanted in the human heart."

When Kant speaks of an "inborn faculty for recognizing duties," he also refers to an aspect of human life which he regards as the basic condition for morally serious reflecting. According to him, morally serious reflecting is not concerned with clarifying the meaning of language, unless such a clarification is empirically significant. That is, it is not morally significant unless it enables a person to understand human life. The same may be said about Butler's expression, "innate moral nature"; which, according to Butler, refers to an aspect of human life, and therefore is morally significant, because empirically meaningful.[4]

Every person who uses the term "conscience," irrespective of the particular way in which he defines it, believes that it is empirically meaningful. That is, he believes that it refers to an aspect of human life, an interpretation of which constitutes the meaning of this term. When Dewey, for example, speaks of "sensitivity to all interests and values," he takes for granted that there is an aspect of human life about which something is understood by means of this expression.[5] Understanding this aspect, therefore, involves something very different from understanding only language. It entails rather comprehending an aspect of human life to which reference is made by this expression. Dewey's expression, therefore, is meaningful to all who believe that there is an aspect of human life which is designated by the term "sensitivity," and who also believe that whatever this aspect may be, it is of fundamental significance for an understanding of the distinctions about which Dewey speaks in his moral philosophy.

Each one of the philosophers mentioned uses some expression to refer to what he regards as a factor which constitutes an aspect of human nature. Such a factor is designated by a wide variety of expressions, as for instance, "law of reason within"; "law of God implanted in the human heart"; "inborn faculty"; "innate nature"; "sensitivity to all interests and values." What, however, is common to all of these expressions is the conviction that they are *empirically* meaningful, since all are used with the assumption that they designate an aspect of human life, or "human nature." This assumption, in turn, is, of course, no clearer to any person than is the meaning of the expression "human nature." Yet, the one thing which is clear to all who use any of these expressions is that what is referred to is as much a reality or fact as is human life itself.

Any person who uses the term "conscience" as defined in any of the foregoing ways, will look upon the meaning which Mill assigns to this term as semantically clear, although as empirically insignificant. Mill indeed considers a type of experience when he maintains that conscience is a pain which follows a violation of a duty. In referring to a type of experience in defining the term "conscience," however, he makes no attempt to account for the fact that there is such an experience. Yet, this is a concern of many reflective people who are well aware that pain may follow the violation of what is regarded as duty. In fact, when Mill speaks of conscience as "encrusted over with collateral associations derived from sympathy, from love and still more from fear," he himself uses the term "conscience" to refer to *something* which accounts for the quality of experience that he characterizes as "pain," or as "painful." In this latter analysis, Mill thus uses the term "conscience" in a way which corresponds to the way it is used by those who are not extreme empiricists.

The vocabulary which empiricists use to state their philosophy, however, is ambiguous for the purposes for which *they* use it, and its ambiguity arises from the fact that nonempiricists have established the meanings of terms in common discourse which empiricists, however, take over to affirm their own philosophical positions. Thus although the primary philosophical concern of logical empiricists is clarifying the language with which philosophies are affirmed, the language which they themselves use, however, is not defined by meanings which are consistent with the premise of their consistent empiricism.

An empiricist may be aware of a type of experience which we commonly classify as "conscientiousness"; and he may even analyze it as a unique aspect of human life. In analyzing it, however, he takes account of a type of experience, and not of "human nature" which accounts for such an experience. Although it is morally significant that there is such an experience, or type of experience, which we classify as "conscientiousness," yet a meaningful question in morally serious reflecting is what *accounts* for such "conscientiousness"; since conscientiousness about behavior is essential if behavior is to be "conduct," and such behavior alone is the specific subject matter of moral philosophy.

Nothing is contributed to *moral* philosophy when anyone maintains that what is referred to by the term "conscience" is the same aspect of human life as is referred to by the term "conscientiousness." Few of us, consequently, would maintain that "conscientiousness is the *heart* of morality." [6] We are aware that an important question is glossed over when the term "conscience" is used merely as a synonym for "conscientiousness." The terms "conscience" and "conscientiousness," as they are generally used, actually refer to different aspects of human life. One term refers to a type of morally significant behavior; whereas the other term refers to what is assumed to account for such behavior.

Although we may use the term "conscience" to designate something which is other than behavior, we may at the same time agree with Locke that there is no universal set of standards which constitute "conscience." According to anthropological studies, however, people, irrespective of their cultural differences, distinguish what they treat with respect, from what they do not treat with respect. People of different cultures have different ideas about rights and duties, although, as Professor Garnett points out, "none is without concepts of right and duty." [7] The fact that men universally do distinguish between right and wrong, irrespective of their cultural differences, should not be confused with the fact that what men regard as right and wrong reflect cultural differences; and an acknowledgment of this fact must likewse not be confused with an *explanation* for it. In other words, we may take account of the fact that all people, irrespective of cultural differences, make morally significant distinctions, without also venturing an explanation for this fact.

Malinowski's description of the behavior of primitive

Trobriand Islanders in terms of *conduct,* and not merely in terms of animal behavior, is significant for a moral philosophy. Malinowski points out that although a particular person owns a canoe which is suitable for fishing, other persons, nevertheless, are regarded as having rights both to a place in that canoe, and also to a share of the catch when the canoe is used. A person who owns a canoe, furthermore, is regarded as having responsibilities to those who use this canoe. He is looked upon as having an obligation either to take it out for fishing, or to lend it to others so that they can fish. The fact that primitive men are aware of obligations and rights, and approve of certain types of acting, and disapprove of others, is, therefore, of profound importance in reflecting on the *nature* of human life.

The fact that people universally make basic *types* of distinctions, irrespective of the culture in which they live, is a fact which we may not ignore in an empirical moral philosophy, even though we cannot account for it. There are, of course, many aspects of human life of which we must take account in our reflecting even though we cannot understand them, in the sense of being able to account for them. No person demonstrates reflective competency by denying the existence of everything which he does not understand, and which he cannot "explain."

In defining conscience as "the inference from our past experiences as guidance for our future," nothing, for example, is said about the *capacity* to make such inferences. Yet, the fact that such inferences are made, confronts us with a problem of interpreting the fact that they *are* made. If there is a capacity to make inferences, this fact then is at least acknowledged in using the term "capacity." Using the term "capacity," like using the terms "conscience," "consciousness," or even "mind," is not the same, of course, as understanding the aspects of human life to which any of these terms refer. Yet, in using the term "capacity" to refer to something which is other than experience, we at least recognize that there is an aspect of human life which is other than experience itself. Denying, on the other hand, that there is such an aspect, by using a vocabulary which refers only to experience, does not account for the fact that there is experience; and it is just this problem of accounting for certain *types of experience* which persists even after we have used our clearest terms to equate one type of experience with another type of experience. Although we may hesitate to define the term "conscience," we do not, however, hesitate to use it, and in using this term, most of us believe that we take account of something other than socially conditioned *experiences.*

The term "conscience," like the term "will," has been used in moral philosophies for centuries, and has acquired so many meanings that it cannot intelligibly be used today without a detailed explanation of the way it is used. It has meant an innate or inborn faculty; and it has had this meaning in moral philosophies which have taken over the vocabulary and concepts of faculty psychologies. It has meant "the voice of God within"; and it has had this meaning in moral philosophies which have taken over the vocabulary and concepts of religions. An enumeration of the many senses with which this term has been used in the history of moral philosophies would, in fact, be a review of a very considerable segment of moral philosophy.

We need not, however, know anything of the history of this term, and of its meanings, to be aware that one aspect of our lives is an awareness of obligations or responsibilities. Insofar as we are aware of obligations or responsibilities, we recognize them with a sense of "ought," and it is such a sense of "ought," as an aspect of our lives, that we refer to by the term "conscience." We may, however, refer to this aspect of our lives without also using the particular term "conscience"; since in reflecting on an awareness of obligation, or on the sense of ought, we lose nothing by eliminating the particular *term* "conscience." If the term "conscience" refers to an awareness of obligation, it may, for example, be replaced by the expression, "awareness of obligation"; and in making this substitution, a term which has acquired so many meanings from faculty psychologies is replaced by an expression which does not have these meanings.

Every psychologist who observes human behavior is aware of aspects of human life which are distinguishable from other aspects. One such aspect is "a feeling of oughtness"; or "a sense of responsibility"; or "an awareness of obligation." If these various expressions mean anything to us, it is due to the *fact* that there is an aspect of our lives of which we are aware that supplies the meaning for these expressions. If we assign this empirical or factual meaning to the word "conscience," this word then may certainly be used without confusion. Yet, confusion is so common in philosophies which use the word "conscience," that it may be desirable to avoid using this term, unless its meaning is clarified.

In explicating the expression, "the sense of ought," which may well replace the *term* "conscience," no mention need be made of an inborn capacity or faculty. Most of us, if not all of us, are aware of a "sense of obligation" which we do not confuse with our feelings. We distinguish it from other aspects of our experience; and in so doing, we take account of a basic datum about which philosophers have reflected for centuries. In being aware of what is regarded as capable of enriching the quality of life, in distinction to what is recognized as impairing it, we are aware of "a sense of ought." We are aware that in recognizing this qualitative distinction, we are also aware of our esteem for the one, which we do not confuse with our attitude toward the other. In recognizing that a particular type of act is capable of contributing to the enhancement of life, we are also aware of our obligation in relation to it. We are aware that we are confronted with an obligation when we are confronted with an alternative between what can enhance life, and what can impair it. The very capacity to make this distinction is the minimum condition for morality; and apart from this capacity, no form of life can even be thought of as "morally responsible." In classifying a form of life as "morally responsible," we thus think of it as capable of making distinctions between what is worthy of approval and what is not worthy of approval. What in turn is recognized as "worthy of approval" is regarded as having a "right to be," and so is acknowledged as putting oneself under an obligation to do what he can to respect it.

This complex analysis obviously adds nothing to the clarification of the *term* "conscience" for a person, unless this term already has some *moral* significance for him; and its moral significance for him need not be limited to any particular analysis, such as is given in this book. Yet, unless a person uses this term with the meaning of obligation, or responsibility, it is doubtful that it is *morally* significant for him.

The reality to which we refer when we speak of "conscience" is the aspect of life to which we also refer when we speak of "the sense of obligation," or "the awareness of an ought" which confronts us with responsibility; and in referring to this aspect of human life, we may use any of these language expressions. What alone is being argued, however, is that a *statement* about this aspect of human life does not contribute to an intelligible moral philosophy when ambiguous terms are used, since speaking about the moral aspect of human life can contribute to an intelligible moral philosophy only when an intelligible vocabulary is employed.

Reducing the ambiguity of the language which we use in reflecting about moral distinctions is one means to achieve an intelligible moral philosophy; and it is for this reason that a semantic operation upon the language of a moral philosophy is not an incidental matter, but is essential to clear reflecting on moral distinctions.

3. *A consideration of the truth of interpretations of moral significance is an empirical inquiry*

A moral philosophy is no more competent than is the adequacy of its vocabulary, which is measured by its capacity to take account of fundamental distinctions; and ascertaining what these distinctions are, is an empirical or scientific problem. A person, therefore, need not be acquainted with the terminology of any particular philosophy in order to understand the semantic condition to which all empirical moral philosophies must conform. The term "will," for example, which is commonly used in moral philosophies is ambiguous. It often refers to a so-called "faculty"; and yet, a person who does not believe that a so-called "faculty" psychology is scientifically sound, ought not to use a word which historically has been defined in terms of such a psychology. The term "will," however, need not be discarded from a moral philosophy simply because it has often been used with the sense of a "faculty"; since it may also be used to mean "acts of choice," which are not thought of as "inborn" or "innate" faculties; and this second meaning is compatible with modern psychology.

If, however, the term "will" is used to refer to "acts of choice," it might be replaced by the expression "acts of choice," which is less ambiguous. In taking over the term "will" from traditional moral philosophies, we also take over connotations from antiquated psychologies which have provided much of the meaning for this term. In using the expression, "acts of choice," instead of the term "will," we thereby safeguard a modern moral philosophy from the needless handicap of a discredited psychology.

One sound reason for preferring the expression, "acts of choice," to the term "will," is that this expression does not have the same associations which are imported from a discarded psychology. We, however, commonly use the expression, "a good will," and such usage is not objectionable; provided, of course, we understand clearly what we mean when we use it. If we mean the actual *directing* of our efforts toward achieving what will contribute to the enhancement of life, our own or others, then we do *not* think in terms of a faculty psychology. We likewise commonly use the expression, "strong will," by which we mean using our energies efficiently for achieving a desired objective. If, therefore, we were to replace the term "will," by the expression, "acts of choice," we would also be helping in clarifying the expression, "free will." Since the term "will" is a carry-over from the vocabulary of a faculty psychology, the expression, "free will," can hardly be expected to be without the same carry-over. If the expression, "acts of choice," on the other hand, can convey a meaning which is compatible with modern psychology, it is preferable to the term "will" in formulating a modern empirical moral philosophy. By the same token, the expression, "free will," may be replaced by the expression, "acts of *choice*."

"Acts of choice" are a type of behavior which is not coerced by factors that are external to an individual's own initiative. In directing a person's efforts to achieving an objective which he himself acknowledges as his responsibility, or his obligation, he thereby behaves in a way which traditional moral philosophies refer to as "freedom of the will," or as "free will." No morally significant distinction need, therefore, *in principle* be ignored by changing the vocabulary of traditional moral philosophies to one which is more compatible with modern sciences, although needless confusion is eliminated when terms which are used in modern moral philosophies do not have meanings which carry over from antiquated sciences.

Every choice we make is morally significant according to its effectiveness, or lack of it, for achieving a desired moral end. Aristotle, for instance, maintains that happiness is *the* moral end. He also maintains that happiness is living according to reason. In reflecting about what Aristotle means, we must, therefore, consider two very different things. We must consider the effectiveness of living according to reason as a way to achieve what is most worth achieving, which Aristotle refers to as "happiness"; and we must also consider whether happiness, which is a quality of life, is what is most worth considering as *the* justification for a person's life. We may agree with Aristotle's interpretation of the most suitable way to achieve happiness, and yet not agree with him that happiness is *the* primary consideration of a person who wants to achieve what is *most worth achieving*. Aristotle may be "right" when he maintains that a "life according to reason" is the way to achieve happiness when a person considers only himself, and considers only what he can choose as a means to contribute to the enrichment of *his own life*. Yet Aristotle may be "wrong" in believing that the enrichment of one's own life is *the* most important of all considerations of which a person is capable.

We say that a choice is "right" when it *is* effective for achieving what we desire. We also say that it is "right" when it is effective for achieving what *we believe* is morally worth desiring. In maintaining that a choice is right if it is effective for achieving what we desire, we evaluate only the instrumental adequacy of what we do for achieving what we desire. Yet, in speaking about a "right" choice, we also think about the moral worthiness of the end for whose attainment we make a choice. This shift of meaning in using the term "right," therefore, is a condition for an ambiguity of the term "right," although in both senses, the term connotes "effectiveness" for achieving what is desired. Yet, what is effective for achieving what is desired is an empirical consideration of a type which is different from a consideration of the worth of achieving a desired end. Living according to reason, for example, which Aristotle recommends as the most effective way for achieving the greatest possible enrichment of an individual's own life, *when his own life is the only consideraton,* must be distinguished from a consideration for achieving the greatest possible enrichment of life when more than an individual's own life is considered. Although "right" may be used in both cases, it is, nevertheless, used with different meanings. In both cases, however, it is judged by empirical criteria of effectiveness, although the empirical criteria themselves differ in their moral significance, because they differ in the type of morally significant reality of which account is taken. The type of reality, for example, which is considered by a eudaemonist, such as Aristotle, when he thinks about the greatest possible enrichment of life, differs from the type of reality which is considered by an altruist, who is also concerned with happiness, but not only with his own happiness.

The scope of consideration in a moral philosophy is fundamentally different for a person who is primarily concerned with what he can do to bring about the enrichment of his own life, and what he can do to bring about the enrichment of another person's life. In a well-known play, for example, two sisters love the same man. Although the elder sister loved him first, when she became aware that the happiness of her sister depended upon marrying him, she gave up anticipating her own marriage to him; and in declaring that "There is no love like falling in love with the happiness of those we love," she maintained an empirically sound generalization. In "falling in love with the happiness of those we love," we contribute both to our own life, and also to others; but in so doing, we may be motivated by two very different considerations. We may believe that "in the long run" we ourselves will be "better off," or "happier," because we think of what we do in terms of what will contribute to our own lives. In thinking, on the other hand, of what we can do to enrich another person's life, irrespective of its effect upon our own lives, we act out of consideration for the well-being or the happiness of other persons.

We need not doubt that the elder sister in this play acted out of consideration entirely for the welfare of her sister. Yet, the generalization which she affirmed in defense of what she did is anything but clear; and the fact that it is not clear, confronts us with a specifically philosophical problem. It is clarifying what is affirmed in this affirmation about a way of living which is a means to achieve what is "most worth desiring." A clarification of this expression is not merely an analysis of what is most effective for achieving what a person desires, when he considers everything in terms of its contribution to his own life. It is rather an analysis of the scope of reality to which he morally *should* give his attention.

Considering the range of reality to which a person *should* give his attention in reflecting about life is prior to his passing judgment upon which particular way of acting is morally right; and "right" not only in the sense of being effective for attaining what he desires, but also in the sense of being effective for attaining what actually is most worth attaining. A particular choice may be said to be "right" in so far as it contributes to achieving a particular end of acting. And yet, it may not contribute to the total enrichment of a person's life. Hence a morally serious person must be aware of this distinction when he considers what is worthy of his total life in relation to others.

Even the Sophists of Socrates' day believed that there are "right" opinions; and yet, they maintained that each man himself is the measure of which opinions are right. Thus as Socrates points out, the Sophists are inconsistent in maintaining the view of Protagoras that "Man is the measure," when at the same time they believe that they are more qualified than others to teach sound philosophy. The Sophists use the term "right" in speaking about what is thought, just as we use the term "right" in speaking about "what is the case." According to the Sophists, it is the case that their teachings are more effective to equip students to argue than are the teachings of Socrates; and Socrates does not deny this, although he contests the worth of what they regard as the sole consideration in selecting teachers.

According to the Sophists, an ability to argue in defense of a point, "whether it is true or false," is the most desired of all skills attainable by education; and it is the worth of this achievement which Socrates denies. He does not question the effectiveness of the Sophists' teaching for attaining what the Sophists regard as most worth attaining. He contests only the actual worth of what the Sophists regard as having utmost worth. Thus although he does not deny that the Sophists have effective methods to get what they want, he denies that what they want has the significance which they think it has. That is, he does not deny the effectiveness of the means which they use to get the end which they seek, but he does deny that the end which they seek is as worthwhile as they think it is. As a matter of fact, the entire purpose of Socrates' cross-examination of the Sophists is to discredit the scope of their moral considerations as *empirically* unsound. Socrates regards the scope of life to which they give their attention as less than it *should* be; and "less than it should be," according to an empirical criterion.

The empirical criterion of every moral philosophy is what actually *is* capable of contributing to the achievement of what *is* most worth-while attaining in human life. The sole scope of human life, however, in which the Sophists have interest is getting what they want by the means that they want to use. Socrates, on the other hand, never questions the effectiveness of the means that they use for getting the end which they seek. He questions only the effectiveness of attaining the end which they seek provided there is more to be considered than what they actually do consider. He questions, for example, the effectiveness of their techniques to equip young men for political life, when they themselves do not consider what contributes to the well-being of a state. The scope of well-being to which the Sophists give their entire attention is winning an argument by any means whatever; and it is the consequence of this type of technique with which Socrates is morally concerned. The scope of concern of the Sophists thus accounts for what they consider to be "most worth desiring"; and it is the scope of Socrates' concern which constitutes the basis for his opposition to the Sophists.

The basis for Socrates' opposition to the unsoundness of the Sophists' teaching is an empirical consideration: It is the effect of their teachings upon the state. He criticizes the ineffectiveness of their teachings, because their teachings do not contribute to creating a state in which they themselves can teach what they believe is "most worth wanting." From his point of view, therefore, the Sophists are morally wrong, because what they teach is incompatible with the type of state in which men have "rights," such as the Sophists enjoy.

When we speak about what *is* morally right, we do not refer only to what we think is morally right. What we think is right constitutes what we believe should be done; but what we believe about this, refers to what we assume to be other than merely what we think. When Bentham, for example, speaks about what is morally right, he thinks about what *is* capable of contributing to the well-being of human life. Hence when he defines the word "right" as "conducive to general happiness," he does not refer only to what *he thinks* is effective for achieving this, but rather to what actually *is* effective for achieving it.

When the term "happiness" is used in this way, we do not think that its meaning can be clarified only by a verbal definition. We are aware of actual differences in the qualities of lives of which men are capable, and so we are also aware that what men do makes a difference in the qualities of lives which they achieve. Our awareness of the relation between what men do, and the quality of their lives, includes our consideration of the effectiveness of what men do in terms of the quality of their lives. What actually *is* effective, however, for enabling men to be happy is, according to Bentham, of primary moral significance; and this is an empirical consideration, because it takes account of the actual relation between a quality of life which is classified as "happiness" and what men are capable of doing to bring about such happiness. All that can be done by men which actually *is* "conducive to general happiness" is, according to Bentham, the scope of moral responsibility; and it is also the scope of what *is* morally right. It *is* morally right that what men can do to bring about happiness, they should do. The meaning of "should" in this case is thus itself the meaning of moral responsibility; since we do not understand what constitutes moral responsibility, according to Bentham, until we comprehend the fact that men have a right to the quality of life which he refers to as "happiness."

The problem, therefore, with which a utilitarian, such as Bentham, is concerned in discussing the nature of moral "right" is not merely semantic. It is rather the *fact* that the quality of human life, which is classified as "happiness," can be influenced by what men do. Any person who seriously maintains a utilitarian philosophy is convinced that men *can* do something which actually *is* "conducive to general happiness." Although the meaning of "general happiness" can be clarified by a semantic procedure, what cannot be clarified by such a means is the extent of all that *can* be done which actually is instrumental to human happiness, and so "should be done."

Whatever the quality of life may be which is referred to as "happiness," and whatever the scope of such life may be which is designated as "general happiness," are problems which confront any person who regards himself as a utilitarian; and clarifying these problems is an empirical procedure which is not merely semantical.

When we formulate a moral philosophy, we take account of what we believe men can do to make a beneficial difference in the quality of human life. We differ, however, in what we consider "beneficial." We also differ in what we consider to be the extent of each person's responsibility for achieving what we regard as beneficial; but whatever "morally beneficial" means in our moral philosophy, we think of it as confronting *someone* with moral responsibility. We think of moral responsibility in terms of what we consider to be worth desiring, even though we are aware that there is no one meaning of the expression, "worth desiring." Whatever we interpret as moral responsibility, either our own or another's, constitutes the scope of what we consider to be morally right; but what we specifically mean by "morally right," is what actually *is* effective for bringing into being what *is* most worth desiring.

Only when we have clarified what we regard as "worth desiring" will we have a clarified idea about our own moral responsibility; and clarifying the scope of our own responsibility is not a semantic procedure, because it is not a consideration of language at all. It is rather a consideration of the extent of human life to which our attention must be given if we are to think of ourselves as morally earnest in reflecting on human life.

When we use the term "good" for classifying what we believe to be conducive to human well-being, we use it as meaning "effective" for bringing about such well-being. Even though we do not agree on what we mean by "well-being," we, nevertheless, agree on the empirical meaning of the term "good" as that which is capable of contributing to such well-being. What we think of as "a moral good," or as "morally good," we also regard as capable of contributing to what we consider to be "worth desiring." We never use the term "good" to refer to what we consider to be a handicap in achieving what we think is worth desiring. The term "good," like the term "right," always refers in discourse about moral distinctions to what is regarded as having a capacity for contributing to what *is* worth desiring. When "desirable" is used as "worth desiring," and so as "morally worthy of being desired," it is, therefore, used as are the terms "good" and "right." What is thought of as "morally right" is what is regarded as actually capable of contributing to what is worth desiring, because instrumental to what *is* worth having.

"Worth having," in this sense, is a moral norm; and it is always thought of as having empirical meaning. We make a moral judgment which has such empirical meaning, for example, when we say: "It is good that a father has a job, the income of which is sufficient to provide for his children." In saying this, we mean the same as if we were to say that it is "right"—morally right—that a father has an opportunity to support his children by his own work.

We, therefore, can agree upon the meanings of "good" and "right" in a way in which we cannot agree upon a specific interpretation, such as what constitutes supporting a family; and we can agree upon this, because we do not consider *only* conventional differences. We consider rather fundamental *relations.* The relation of a father to his children, for example, is such a fundamental relation which is not a matter of convention; since the role of a human father is the very condition for *human* life. What we may think of as constituting sufficient, or even necessary, support for a family, on the other hand, is a matter of social conditioning; and it is a matter of convention to an extent that the right of children to the care of their father is not socially conditioned.

We do not think of what we refer to as "a moral right," or "a moral responsibility," as only a matter of social conditioning, or of convention. We think of it as something more; and we believe that no one can be in earnest in reflecting about the basic, elemental relations in human life, such as between parents and children, between members of a community, between one community and other communities, and also be satisfied to spend his time talking about "moral right" as being merely matters of *conventional* distinctions.

Some conventions may not be looked upon as arbitrary impositions upon human life, but must rather be regarded as effective means for bringing benefits into being which actually can contribute to human well-being. A broadside blast, therefore, against conventions as handicaps to well-being is as absurd as the romantic tirade against all habits as detrimental to well-being. The fact that there are some conventions which are detrimental to well-being is not the only fact we must consider when we reflect about the functions of conventions in human life. Conventions did not arise out of themselves, but arose in contexts in which men took account of what seemed at the time to be important, either for preserving life, or for securing specific benefits. What men did under such circumstances may well be looked upon by later generations, or by people of other cultures, as ineffective; and yet, in rejecting conventions for *moral* reasons, we evaluate them for the same basic reason that they were originally supported.

If we are not going to disparage human conventions as totally irrational, we must look upon some of them as initiated, as well as supported, by the assumption of their effectiveness for bringing about what men think is beneficial. The fact that men are commonly mistaken about what they think is effective for bringing into being what actually is beneficial, should not, therefore, loom so large in our reflecting that we do not take account of the *empirical* basis for what men earnestly do. Whatever men earnestly do may well be regarded as expressions of what they believe will contribute to what is beneficial, even though what they do, may actually not have the value which they assume it has. What men have regarded as beneficial may in large measure be included in the class of human ignorance; and yet, although we maintain this, we may, nevertheless, acknowledge that there is an alternative to ignorance; and this alternative is of concern to every person who seriously reflects about what human life could be *if* men did not continue to be ignorant of ways to achieve well-being.

Human ignorance is an intense concern of all who earnestly reflect about human life, although they who reflect about it are no more in agreement about what constitutes ignorance, than they are about what constitutes moral benefits. Yet, we all agree that whatever it is which constitutes ignorance, confronts men with problems, and so with responsibilities; and ascertaining what constitutes such ignorance is a moral problem, although it is a problem of a very different type from ascertaining what men *classify* as ignorance.

We may agree that there is a relation between what men do and the qualities of lives which they attain, even though we do not agree about which quality of life is most worth attaining. Our agreement on this matter, nevertheless, is of utmost significance for an empirical moral philosophy, because distinctions which we seriously make in reflecting on what is worth considering refer not only to language distinctions, and to other conventional distinctions, but also to *human life*. What is of primary importance, consequently, in an empirical moral philosophy, is what men can do to bring about what is worth bringing into being; and this problem will persist so long as there is human life.

4. *The nature of the referent of a critical term in a moral philosophy constitutes an empirical problem*

Critical terms in empirical moral philosophies are assumed to refer to aspects of actual or potential human life; and it is this denotative function of language which is a primary concern in empirical moral philosophies. The expression, "sense of guilt," for instance, as used in psychoanalytical analyses is assumed to refer to an aspect of human life which is of utmost significance in understanding the nature of human life. Psychoanalysts regard statements which contain the expression, "sense of guilt," as having factual meaning, because they denote a factor in human life of which account must be taken if human life is to be understood. Although psychoanalysts do not doubt the denoting role of this expression, many of them question whether it denotes what Freud assumes that it does. According to Freud, the sense of guilt arises from an individual's conflict of feelings for another individual. According to some others, the conflict of feelings which is basic to the sense of guilt is not restricted to a relation between one individual and another individual, but may extend also to groups. Beatrice Webb, for example, interprets the sense of guilt as an experience which occurs among some groups of people of particular economic classes who are seriously concerned with social issues.[8] She believes that the inability of such people to approve of an economic system from which they themselves benefit financially accounts for their sense of guilt.

There are, therefore, at least two very different *empirical* considerations which are involved in using this expression. One is a type of experience; and the other is a factor which is believed to account for the genesis of this experience. Observing the feature of the "sense of guilt" as an aspect of human life is one empirical procedure; whereas accounting for its genesis is another empirical procedure. These two procedures must, however, be distinguished, since what is said about one must be evaluated by data which differ from what is said about the other. The psychologists' affirmation that there *is* a "sense of guilt" may be factually true, even though particular psychologists may offer only partially adequate explanations for its genesis.

When psychologists maintain that the sense of guilt is a *universal* aspect of human life, their generalization confronts us with an empirical problem, since the actual scope of this expression, "sense of guilt," must be investigated by empirical sciences before we can intelligently ascertain if the expression actually does refer to a universal aspect of human life. Freud assumes that this experience is coextensive with human life; and he furthermore assumes that only one explanation is sound in accounting for its genesis. We may, of course, believe that Freud's explanation is sound for interpreting the genesis of this experience only in *some* instances of human life, even though we do not believe that it is equally sound for interpreting every instance of it in human life.

The *facts* to which the expression, "sense of guilt," refer, therefore, may not be the same as the *presumed facts* to which an interpreter, such as Freud, refers when he interprets the genesis of this experience. The *fact* that there is a sense of guilt of which empirical account is taken, should not, consequently, be confused with a particular hypothesis about its genesis. Insofar as any hypothesis takes account of factors which contribute to the genesis of this experience, it is helpful for understanding human life; and its helpfulness is in no way diminished by the supplementary help which may be provided by other hypotheses. We fully understand the nature of the sense of guilt only as we understand every factor which accounts for it; and insofar as there are factors of which a particular hypothesis does not take account in analyzing its nature, that hypothesis is only partially adequate. It may, of course, be adequate for interpreting the sense of guilt as experienced by some individuals; and it may be adequate for understanding the genesis of this type of experience in many, or in most individuals; but, insofar as other factors also enter into the genesis of this experience, they also must be considered. And they must be considered for *empirical* reasons.

The expression, "sense of guilt," is significant in an empirical moral philosophy only insofar as it designates an aspect of human life of which account must be taken in understanding human life—whether it is all of human life, or some of it. This expression, furthermore, is significant in a moral philosophy for an even more specific reason. Analyses of the "sense of guilt" commonly employ a vocabulary such as is used in moral philosophies. The term "conscience," for example, is often used to describe the sense of guilt as "a conflict instigated between conscience and desire." [9] The empirical soundness of this particular analysis, therefore, depends entirely on what is referred to by the term "conscience."

A primary consideration in empirical moral philosophies is the referent of its terms. When we speak of "virtue," for instance, we believe that we take account of a factor in human life which is as "real" as human life itself; and yet, if we were asked to define exactly what we mean when we speak of "virtue," we should be confronted with a very great difficulty. We follow Socrates in believing that courage, temperance, and justice are virtues; but we get little help from him in understanding just what it is to which we refer when we speak of "virtue." The fact itself that Socrates seriously discusses the problem whether there is such a thing as "virtue," or whether there are "virtues," indicates that he was keenly aware of an *empirical* issue underlying discussions about morally significant language.

We all use the term "virtue" with an assurance that we refer to some aspect of human life about whose existence we have not the slightest doubt. Yet, we are far from being convinced that this term refers to any single type of conduct in human life. We are convinced that men are courageous; and we classify courageous acting as virtuous, even though we are not very clear about what it is to which we refer by the term "virtue." We believe, for instance, that a physician who works in a disaster for three days and nights without sleep is a hero; and we look upon his acting as a virtue. But we are bewildered by just what it is to which we refer as "virtue." We classify many types of acting as virtues; and we speak of an individual who exemplifies any one of them as "acting virtuously." But we are confronted with a problem about what we mean when we speak about a person who exemplifies even one "virtue" as acting "virtuously." How a person can be virtuous, or act virtuously, when he exhibits the features peculiar to *one* type of virtuous acting, although there are many types of acting which we classify as virtues, is a problem such as perplexed Socrates when he asked if there is such *a* reality as virtue, or if there are *many* virtues. We might restate the question, and ask if there is any factor in human life to which we refer as "virtue"; or if there are only distinguishable patterns of acting which we classify as virtues.

When we speak about "virtue" we do not, however, refer to a pattern of acting in the same way that we do when we refer to "courageous acting." We respect "courageous acting" as virtuous, or as a virtue; but we are not clear about the referent of the term "virtue," by which we classify "courageous acting" as "a virtue."

We believe that there are "temperate," "sincere," and "moderate" "ways of acting," or "types of acting," or "patterns of living"; but we are not equally clear about the meaning of "temperance" as *a* virtue; "sincerity" as *a* virtue; and "moderation" as *a* virtue. We agree with Ben Franklin that "temperance" is *a* virtue; and we agree with him that "silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, moderation, cleanliness, and tranquility" are virtues; but we are not clear about the meaning of the expression, "*a* virtue."

Aristotle defines "virtue" as "a state of character concerned with a choice"; and yet, the slightest consideration of this definition makes us aware that what Aristotle defines is not "virtue."[10] He describes rather the aspect of human life which is referred to by this term. We ourselves use this procedure, for instance, when we speak about temperate acting as "virtuous," or as "a virtue"; and as "revealing character," or as "expressing character." Yet, in thinking about *a* virtue as expressing character, we are no more clear about the referent of the term "character," than we are about the referent of the term "virtue."

We do not doubt that there is *something* to which we refer when we speak of character; although we are not entirely clear about just what this is. We may be clear about the type of acting we classify as exemplifying character; but what "character" is, confronts us with a disturbing problem. We believe that anyone who acts in ways which exemplify what we classify as *a* virtue also has *a* character. We also believe that there are ways of acting which we respect as worthy of praise; but we are not clear what we mean when we speak about character as other than a particular way of acting, or other than particular ways of acting. We are convinced that a way of acting would not be respected as morally worthy unless it were something other than *particular* acting. That is, we are not empiricists when we respect expressions of character, because we believe that in addition to any particular acting which we esteem, there is also *a* character which is expressed in such acting. We praise not only acting as morally worthy, but also *a person* who acts in a particular way; and we praise him specifically for his character. But what we mean by "his character," bewilders us. Insofar, for instance, as we are convinced that a way of acting is courageous, we speak about courage as a virtue which "expresses character." If, however, we were consistent empiricists, we would be satisfied that we mean nothing more by "character" than a general term for classifying various acts. Yet, we are not consistent empiricists when we speak about character. We speak about it as something other than any number of acts; and we speak about it in this way because we believe that there is some factor which accounts for particular acts that we esteem as morally worthy of our praise. We are not satisfied, for instance, to account for consistently courageous acting in the face of various types of danger merely as "responses to stimuli." We believe rather that there is a *consistent pattern* of such responses, because there is some determinant of them which is other than so-called "stimuli." In other words, we believe that more is involved in particular acts which we classify as "expressions of character" than the acts themselves, and therefore we distinguish "an act of character" from "character."

We are, however, no more clear about the nature of character when we speak of it in this way than Locke is about the meaning of "substratum" when he maintains that there is "something" over and above, or in addition to, our experiences. Locke believes that some of our experiences acquaint us with some of the features of physical realities, but he is also convinced that there is more to such realities than what we know by means of experiences. He believes, in other words, that experiences are conditioned by something other than experiences. Insofar, therefore, as we believe that the term "character" refers to more than experience, or more than the total of past and present acting, we think of "character" as Locke thinks of the "substratum" of physical objects. That is, we think of it as accounting for the acting which we regard as "revealing character," or as "expressing character."

The *distinction* is clear between our acting and a reality which persists both before and after our acting. What, however, is not clear, is our comprehension of the nature of that which so persists; and this lack of clarity recurs often in our reflecting on many terms which we commonly use in a moral philosophy. We are no more clear, for instance, about what we mean by the term "self," than we are by what we mean by the term "character." Yet, we are clear that there is something other than our *acting* which justifies classifying various acts as "ours." Whatever it is that persists throughout acting, and conditions it so that it is specifically "ours," is what we refer to when we speak of "our self"; and it is to such a reality which we also refer when we speak of "character."

When Aristotle defines "virtue" as "a state of character concerned with a choice," he merely points out the particular aspect of life to which he refers when he uses the term "virtue." Yet, when he speaks about virtue as "a state of character," he in no way contributes to our understanding of the nature of character as that which *accounts* for acts that we esteem as virtues; and we are confident that there is a referent for the term "character" which differs from the referent for the term "virtue."

We use the term "honest," for example, to identify one type of acting; but when we take account of our acting, and when we become aware of inconsistencies in it, we hesitate to believe that there is a factual referent for the term "honesty," such as there is for the term "character." We are aware, for instance, that men who are dependable in giving their word that they will pay their grocers at the end of the month, do not hesitate to take towels from hotels; that other men who look upon taking towels from hotel rooms as "theft," will not hesitate to falsify their income tax reports. The fact that there are such inconsistencies in men's behavior does not, however, discourage us from continuing to speak about "honesty"; although it ought to make us aware that there is no *one* factor in human life to which we refer when we *speak* about "honesty."

"Honesty" is a general term, such as "virtue." It is, in other words, an abstraction, although the ways of acting which we may classify as "honest" are not abstractions. Men who pay their bills when they agree to pay them; make out their income tax reports according to the instructions stated by the office of Internal Revenue; pay for the use of a hotel room, without also presuming that they buy its equipment, show a consistency in their acting. And it is such consistency in acting of which we think when we speak of "honesty" as a trait of character. Hence, the term "honesty" as a trait of character means something to us which is different from *an* honest act. Every individual is capable of *an* honest act, or of two, or even more. Yet, only some persons are consistently honest; and it is about this *type* of person which we seriously reflect when we think of "honesty" as an expression of character. We look upon an individual who is honest in one relation, but not in another, as a person of limited character. In so thinking of him, we think of character as something other than particular ways of acting; and if we did not think of character in this way, we should say that a person has as many characters as he exhibits identifiable ways of acting. But we do not speak of character in this way. When we speak of "character," we think of an aspect of a man's life which is as real as a man himself.

There are indeed differences in character; but such differences do not discourage us from speaking about character as a factor in human life over and above human acting. We also do not understand the entire nature of what we refer to by the term "self," any more than we understand all of the nature of what we refer to by the term "character." Yet, we are convinced that there is a human life which is distinguishable from animal life; and that there is a human character which is something other than particular acts. We would not, as a matter of fact, even judge an act as "destitute of character," if we did not think of "character" as something other than particular acts. We think of character as that which accounts for praiseworthy acting; and in this sense, we think of a man's character as something more than his acting. And in believing this, we are "realists," in distinction to being "empiricists."

We hold an individual responsible, not only for particular acts, but also for his character. The soundness of doing this, however, is denied by everyone who believes that, whereas acting is conditioned by character, character is not conditioned by acting. Yet, anyone who believes that a person is morally responsible both for his acting, and also for his character, thinks of acting as conditioning character, just as character conditions acting. The expression, "morally responsible," as it is used in our daily discourse and in our court procedure, would, in fact, be without meaning unless character were assumed to condition acting, and acting were also assumed to condition character.

No person is without social conditioning. Yet, insofar as any person is held accountable for an act, it is assumed that he might have acted differently than he did act. Persons are held morally responsible for what they do in relation to each other, even though what they do in social relations is conditioned by social relations. Yet, we believe that over and above the conditioning of people by their social context, they are also capable of selecting some conditioning, and so are capable of rejecting other conditioning. We think of people's characters in part as products of their social conditioning; and yet, we also think of their characters as conditioning such social conditioning. And this is no paradox, since the acting which conditions character is not the same acting which is conditioned by character. We believe that an essential condition for moral responsibility is character, which we think of as a capacity to select and reject social conditioning. Although each of us is aware that what is referred to as a "person's character," or even as "a person," is conditioned by the context in which he lives; we, nevertheless, assume that there is some aspect of a person's acting which is not entirely a product of social conditioning. And we accept this assumption as empirically sound, notwithstanding all of the *theoretical* objections which may be made against the notion of character as something other than social conditioning. Understanding all that is implied in the *moral* meaning of character, however, is a lifetime undertaking; since only as we learn from the empirical sciences about the complex nature of human life, will the concept "character" itself be "philosophically" clarified.

Chapter VII

CONCRETE CONCERNS IN AN EMPIRICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *Human living is coping with facts*

Most people anticipate a future for which they make plans, and in doing so, they take account of facts. Anyone, for example, who wants to pass some of his property on to his children cannot ignore the fact that his industry, thrift, and concern for their welfare are not as such sufficient, but must be supplemented by a knowledge of the means by which property can be preserved, at least in part, against the inroads of ever-increasing taxation. This is not a theoretical problem. It is intensely practical. A person's kindness, generosity, and good will are likewise not sufficient to settle an estate after death. In making plans for such a settlement, a person must take account of what *specifically* can be done with property to provide for a family; and this is a *concrete* problem.

The intelligence with which a person plans for the future is one condition over which he can exert control in the present. A person, for instance, can control his property for the benefit of his family through legally authorized wills and trusts. Such a control, however, is contingent upon the intelligence with which he anticipates the future; and one aspect of such an intelligent control is a knowledge of a state's right to his property in the form of inheritance taxes. No person can, of course, entirely anticipate what taxation will be in the future; but he can at least plan for a future disposition of his property in light of what he can reasonably predict about a tax policy in the future. There is always a wide latitude of unpredictability about future taxation; and yet, taking advantage of all that can be known about what is likely to occur in the future in regard to tax policies is one aspect of an intelligent person's concern for the welfare of those whose lives are in any way affected by a future disposition of his property. Taking account of a detail which apparently is so remote from moral speculation as taxation, nevertheless, is one factor in any sensible person's planning for the future.

A person's consideration for the welfare of his family includes the most prosaic of details. Yet all of these details must be taken into account, not because a person enjoys thinking about them, but because someone will have to think about them if a person himself does not. If a person himself does not prepare for the inevitable expenses which are entailed in his own death, someone else will have to do so. Any person who is considerate of the welfare of his family, therefore, must take account of the fact that he will some day die; and this fact entails expenses of which every person should be aware. Any person who is concerned with the welfare of those who will be affected by his death, and by a possible illness before his death, must likewise be concerned with what he can do to lessen the avoidable economic strain upon them by his illness and his death. Fortunately, there are means which are available for this specific purpose. There are insurances of every type; but in order to benefit from them at a time when they are needed, a person must take account of them at a time when they are not needed. All of this is so obvious that one almost hesitates to speak about it; and yet, this most obvious aspect of our complex life is glossed over, or totally ignored, by traditional moral philosophies. Failure to take account of this, however, is an expression of a well-nigh total disregard for the *factual* character of the context in which individuals discharge moral obligations about which theorists philosophize. This disdain for details may indeed contribute to a high-sounding philosophy; but it is also an indictment of the *moral* value of such a philosophy. A moral philosophy has moral value only as it is instrumental in helping individuals to clarify the *concrete* problems with which they are confronted in working out their well-being, or in contributing to the well-being of others; and the well-being neither of oneself nor of others is realistically considered when specific aspects of his own or their lives are ignored.

Notwithstanding the short-sightedness of some moral theories, it is a *fact* that many people do plan for the welfare of their families by taking account of a vast number of details, a mention of which is seldom, if ever, made in moral philosophies. Many individuals who know nothing about moral theories, are, however, perfectly sound in what they do when they take account of many facts which affect their own well-being and the well-being of others. One such fact of which they commonly take account is that insurance can be paid for in the present which will provide economic help in the future. Everyone who inconveniences himself in the present in order to pay for insurance which will provide help in the future for someone, is, therefore, concerned with the most specific of facts. Although such a person may not be interested in theories about well-being, he is, nevertheless, interested in the specific means by which well-being can be controlled.

It is a fact that the lives of many people conform in detail to the finest idealism of moral theories; and yet, very few moral theories even take account of the lives of such people. The disparity, therefore, between the scope of human life of which moral theorists take account, and the details of which morally serious individuals themselves take account, is certainly an indictment of moral theory.

A traditional aspect of moral philosophies is analyzing the nature of well-being; but what is not equally an aspect of traditional moral philosophies is considering the fact that such well-being is realized only in concrete contexts. No moral philosophy, consequently, is morally more helpful than is the common sense which it expresses in taking account of a vast number of details, all of which may seem to be most prosaic according to the standards of traditional moral philosophies. The fact, however, that someone must pay for the use of a hospital and for the services of physicians cannot be ignored by any person who reflects about moral philosophy. A person cannot help, therefore, but be amused by Professor Moore's statement that "*the* primary and peculiar business of Ethics (is) the determination (of) what things have intrinsic value and in what degree."[1] Although this is one consideration in moral philosophy, it certainly is not *the* primary consideration.

A fundamental concern in serious moral philosophy is taking account of the fact that human well-being is realized only in concrete social contexts, each one of which consists of a host of specific factors; and taking account of such factors is one aspect of serious reflecting, both for purposes of formulating a philosophy about well-being, and also for purposes of securing well-being.

There is no concern in a moral philosophy which is not somehow related to the *specific* problems of achieving well-being for someone. It is obvious, therefore, that no reflecting on well-being is competent unless it takes account of much which is far removed from theory. If, for example, a person does not pay for his own hospital expenses, someone else must do so; and the very fact that such expenses may be greater than the most honest and industrious person can manage, is, fortunately, taken into account in the widespread practice of hospital insurance. The fact, therefore, that such insurance is available, is a very significant factor of which account must likewise be taken in formulating a modern moral philosophy. Insofar as a person has hospital insurance, he is able not only to have medical attention at a time when he needs it; but he also reduces the worry and the sadness of all those who are concerned with his welfare by being able to secure the help which they wish for him. Thus providing for hospitalization is one specific way by which a person today can control much that affects not only his own well-being, but also the well-being of others.

No moral philosophy which is proposed today is worth serious consideration unless it takes account of the type of facts with which a person is confronted when he seriously wants to secure his own and others' well-being; and no person can seriously want such well-being without taking account of every fact so far mentioned. A moral philosophy must, therefore, take account of the fact that every morally serious person is confronted with a host of facts—every one of which is specific, concrete, and particular. There are no theoretical facts; and there are no speculative contexts in which people live. The contexts in which people live are particular; and these contexts are made up of a vast number of aspects, every one of which is concrete, and so confront a person with specific problems.

A morally serious person is concerned with these problems, and desires to do all that he can to understand them in ways that will contribute to the well-being of those in whose lives he is concerned. There is no general moral acting; and there is no abstract plan for moral acting. Acting is always specific; and every plan of acting is equally specific. A plan, of course, may be formulated which anticipates acting; and such a plan is abstracted from actual acting, although it is morally effective only insofar as the *type of acting* which is anticipated is specific. This is no paradox, since a plan for future acting is effective only insofar as it takes account of a type of acting which actually does occur in the future. A moral philosophy, for example, which discusses duty, but not a *type* of duty with which people are confronted in specific situations, is not morally helpful, since an analysis of duty is morally helpful only to the extent that what is said about duty is a consideration with which a person is confronted in the concrete contexts in which he actually is related to others.

No moral philosophy, of course, can take account of all the specific situations in which people are related to others. Yet, no moral philosophy is worth its salt which does not take account of the *fact* that there are such specific relations which confront every person with the moral duty of ascertaining what he specifically can do. A person, therefore, who presumes to formulate a moral philosophy today must take account of the fact that there are insurances for every aspect of our complex life; and taking account of this fact is taking an inventory of the possible *types* of morally significant means which are available to us. Since, for instance, the well-being of a person's family is at stake in the type of insurance which he carries or does not carry, insurance is today one aspect of a morally serious person's life. Since life insurance, such as we have in our country, is not available in many other countries, a person who formulates a moral philosophy in another country would not, therefore, be under obligation to take account of the same set of facts as a person who formulates a moral philosophy in our country.

A moral philosopher cannot specify the particular type of insurance which a person might carry that would be most helpful for him and others closely related to him, but he can point out that since morally serious concern is for the welfare of others, a morally serious father, for instance, is necessarily concerned with insurances which are available to him for caring for his children. Specifying this as a condition for a morally serious parent's concern is, of course, meaningful only in our culture, or in others which are comparable with it, in which similar insurances are also available.

Moral responsibility is always within the scope of what is possible for a person; and what is possible for a person is limited to what he can do in the particular contexts in which he lives. Morally serious reflecting, therefore, is not possible apart from considering specific responsibilities; and so morally significant philosophy itself is not possible apart from taking account of the fact that there are specific responsibilities with which every person is confronted. A morally serious person does not create them, but he acknowledges them; and if he is morally sincere, he does all that he can to discharge them. In discharging them, however, he must take account of specific factors. Affirming as a premise, therefore, the fact that there *are* such specific obligations is itself one aspect of a competent moral philosophy.

2. *Moral evaluations are assumed to be factual propositions*

Evaluations of moral worth are factual propositions, in the sense that their soundness can be tested by "facts." An affirmation, for example, that one type of food is "better" than another, because more nutritious than another, and, therefore, is more capable of contributing to a person's health than another, is a proposition about a fact. When we believe, for instance, that one food is more nutritious than another, we also believe that a selection of the more nutritious food, in preference to a less nutritious food, is a sound or "sensible" selection. The capacity of a food to provide the nourishment we desire is thus itself a criterion on the basis of which we evaluate the "worth" of foods which are available to us. When our primary interest in food is securing nourishment, we select a food which we believe fulfills this requirement. If the food we select actually is capable of nourishing us, then our belief that this is the case is a sound interpretation; and our affirmation of this belief is a factual proposition, in the sense that it is a testable interpretation.

Every selection which we seriously make expresses an interpretation, and if we were to state this interpretation, we would affirm a factual proposition. When, for instance, we say that one thing is "better" than another, we affirm what we believe to be an informed interpretation of its nature; and such an interpretation is a "factual" proposition. If we were to assume that every act of selecting is of equal significance, we would make no effort to be informed of the nature of the objects which we select. Yet, we do try to know the nature of the things which we select, and such effort expresses our concern that what we think about an object is actually informed of the nature of the object.

A person seriously prefers one thing to another only when he believes that it has a property which he desires. His belief that it has such a property is not an interpretation of his desire, but rather of the nature of the object which he desires. Aristotle, for example, maintains that whatever is classified as "good," is thought of as having a capacity to fulfill some function; and whatever actually is capable of fulfilling the functions for which it is selected, is "good." A person is thought of as a "good" bank employee provided he may be trusted with other people's money. What is meant by his "goodness" in this evaluation is his honesty in handling money with which he is entrusted. A person likewise who is steadfast in keeping his promise is justifiably esteemed for a moral trait which he actually possesses, which is his capacity to keep his promise. When, therefore, we speak of a person who has such a capacity as a "good" person, we use the predicate "good" to refer to a fact; and so our evaluation, "This person is good because he is capable of being loyal," is thus a factual proposition.

When we trust a person as honest and loyal, we presume that our trust of him is justified by the *fact* that he is worthy of our trust. Our belief that he is worthy of our trust is thus a *factual* proposition, because we look upon it as capable of being confirmed by the fact of the person's character.

When we endeavor to confirm an estimate of a person's character, we express our conviction that such an estimate is about a fact; and we undertake to test the soundness of what we believe about a person's character when we look upon our belief as an interpretation of some fact, or set of facts. If we did not believe that there were some factual referent for our interpretation, we would treat our interpretation as we treat illusions or delusions. But the very fact that we seriously respect some of our interpretations, indicates that we treat at least these as factual propositions; and as such, we look upon them as worthy of our serious efforts to test their truth. We seriously test a proposition, however, only when we are convinced that there is at least a probable basis for confirming it; and if we did not presume its confirmation is even probable, we would never seriously undertake to test it for its soundness.

We affirm a presumed fact, for example, when we say that one person is more worthy of our trust than another, because we believe that there is evidence on the basis of which we can confirm what we think about such a person. The particular fact which we interpret in this case is his capacity to justify our trust. Our trusting another person is a feature of our lives, whereas the capacity of another person to justify our trust is a feature of his life; and as such, we think of it as a feature of his character. When we think that a person is honest, and he actually has a character capacity to be as honest as we think he is, then our estimate of his character is a true proposition; and it is true because what we think of him actually corresponds to the fact of his honesty. When a person is as honest as we believe he is, our estimate of him can be confirmed; and it can be confirmed by the fact of the character trait in whose existence we trust.

When we believe that a person is honest, we believe that we can confirm what we think about him; and the very possibility for such a confirmation is a property of a proposition, since a proposition is an interpretation which is capable of being confirmed or disconfirmed. What confirms or disconfirms a proposition is something about which an interpretation is affirmed; and that about which our serious moral judgments are affirmed is always presumed to be other than our own judgments.

No morally serious person confines his attention to his own value judgments. He also considers the objects about which he makes such evaluations. What he thinks about an object is his interpretation of it; but the soundness of his interpretation is determined by the fact that it refers beyond itself to what it interprets. When we approve of a person's sacrifice, for example, we interpret what a person does; and in our approval of this, we are not preoccupied with what *we think*. We are rather concerned with the *truth* of what we think; and this is with the soundness of what we think. In approving what another person does, we think of his acting as having a property which justifies our approving, and so we approve or disapprove as realists. In maintaining, for instance, that a person's act is generous, or is the expression of his generosity, we regard his generous act as a fact; and we look upon its moral worthiness to be approved as a fact of the same status. Some philosophers, however, maintain that such an act is itself devoid of such significance, because they maintain that its sole significance is conferred upon it. Any person, however, who esteems another person for his generosity regards that person's worthiness to be esteemed as much of a fact as his generosity itself; and esteeming him for his generosity is morally evaluating the *fact* of his generosity.

The term "generosity" is morally significant; and a proposition in which it is expressed is a moral evaluation. A proposition, for instance, that a person is generous is presumably factual in the same way as is the evaluation that he is worthy of approval for his generosity. Such approval likewise is a moral evaluation, since it is a judgment about what is regarded as worthy of being respected. Whatever we regard as worthy of our respect, we look upon as having a property; and the presumption that it has such a property is testable. That is, we seriously believe that we know something about an object only when we also believe that we can test the soundness of what we believe about it. In believing this, however, we believe that we know more than the fact that we have a stronger preference for one object than we do for another. We believe also that we are informed of something of the nature of the object which we prefer; and it is this assumption which underlies whatever we think about the *justification* for any of our preferences. Our belief that there is a reality or a property such as we assume, is a factual proposition; and it is a proposition of this sort which is implicit in every serious judgment which we make about moral significance, or moral worth.

In making a judgment about what we regard as morally "right," we presume an empirical criterion by means of which our judgment may be confirmed. When we believe that an act is right, we believe also that *it* has a property which is objectively different from an act which we classify as wrong. We say, for example, that "It is *right* that an adult forego eating food when the amount of food which is available is so limited that both an adult and a child cannot be fed." And saying this, we do not think that our estimate of the moral rightness of such a pattern of acting is conferred upon the pattern by what we think. We, in fact, have respect for our moral sensitivity only because we look upon ourselves as capable of recognizing what is right; and in having such self-respect, we are convinced that there are moral properties of acting which are factual. We believe that some acting is not right in the same factual sense as some materials are not malleable. We do not believe that malleability is a property of metals by virtue of what we think. Our belief that a metal has a certain malleability is, of course, an expression of what we think; but the metal's property of malleability is the object about which we think. And it is the object of our judgment in the same sense in which the rightness of an act is the object of morally sound judgment.

A morally serious person may, of course, be mistaken about which particular value-judgments are worthy of his respect; but every morally serious person agrees that it is *right* for every person to do what will actually contribute most effectively to human well-being. In believing this, every morally serious person believes it is a fact that some ways of acting are more effective than others are for achieving well-being. Whatever a person may believe is effective for this specifically moral purpose, he evaluates as "right." A person who believes that a particular way of acting is morally right, also believes that it is worthy of approval; and he believes that it has a right to command respect because it actually is capable of contributing to the enrichment of human life.

What *is* worthy of respect for its moral worth cannot, of course, be ascertained apart from its effect upon human life; and whatever is done to ascertain this effect is an empirical investigation. When Bentham, for instance, defines "right" as whatever is conducive to "the good" which he conceives of as "general happiness," he specifies an empirical criterion for ascertaining what is right. According to Bentham, a particular way of acting which contributes to human well-being is morally *good;* and it is morally *right* that all men who are capable of acting in this way should do so. It is right that they do so, provided, of course, that their acting in this way actually does contribute to human well-being; and the fact that it does, is a matter for empirical investigation. If a way of acting actually does contribute to well-being, then it is morally right that this way of acting should be approved; and in maintaining this, "morally right" is defined in terms of what is "morally good"; and "morally good" is defined as what actually does contribute to the achievement of a quality of life that is regarded as most worth achieving.

What is most worth achieving by human efforts is most worthy of men's efforts; and whatever is an effective means to achieve this is "morally good"; and it is "morally right" that men take every opportunity they can to use this means. When "right" is thought of in this way, it is thought of as a *property* of acting. The actual effectiveness of an act for achieving a moral good is a property of an act; and it is not a property of a person's intention that he shall act in a way to bring about such a good. We also use the term "right," however, in evaluating an intention that acting should bring into existence what is morally good; and when it is so used, it refers, of course, to a property of a person's life. When, on the other hand, it is used to refer to the consequences of morally "right" acting, it is used as a predicate-term for the property of the consequences of morally earnest acting.

Consequences of acting can be observed, whereas the intentions of a person cannot be observed. Thus there is a difference in empirically testing the rightness of acting, and in ascertaining the rightness of an intention to act. An intention to act is morally right by its actual contribution to the enrichment of human life; and thus an intention is morally right, not by definition, but by the factual consequences in human life.

3. *The basic premises of moral philosophies are affirmed as factual propositions*

Whatever a person regards as *justifying* human life is the basic premise of his moral philosophy. Moral philosophies, of course, differ in what men regard as most worth human effort; but every moral philosophy affirms a belief about what is believed to be most worth such effort. Whatever a person believes is most worth attaining by means of human effort is a proposition about the moral possibilities of human life. An idea of such possibilities is a moral ideal; and all that is implied in this ideal is, therefore, a potential moral philosophy.

Any person who seriously affirms a moral ideal has an idea about what he believes is most worth achieving in life; and so he has an idea about what should justify his own and others' efforts if this were to be achieved. A morally serious person, however, is not interested merely in his idea about what is most worth achieving. He is interested rather in knowing what actually *is* most worth achieving.

Seriously maintaining a moral ideal is interpreting what a person believes can be achieved by means of human effort; and *stating* what can be achieved by human effort is a factual proposition. A person, for example, who seriously maintains that the one good which is most worth achieving in life is the greatest happiness of the greatest number of human beings, regards his ideal as an interpretation of fact. Bentham, for instance, maintains that what most completely justifies human effort is doing all that can be done to contribute to the happiness of the greatest number of people, and all who believe this look upon the basic premise of utilitarian moral philosophy as a factual proposition. According to Utilitarians, it is a *fact* that the one good in human life which most completely justifies human effort is the greatest degree of happiness for the greatest number of people. If any person does not believe that such is the case, he then denies the *soundness* of the Utilitarians' interpretation of human life. In believing that there is something else which is more worth achieving, he maintains an ideal which is the basic premise for another type of moral philosophy.

Any person who interprets human life as Bentham does, believes that human acting which actually can contribute to the happiness of the greatest number of people is morally more worthy of approval than acting which is capable of contributing only to the happiness of a lesser number. According to a person who thinks as Bentham does, the norm of morally right acting is effectiveness for contributing to the greatest achievable happiness for the greatest number of people.

The fact that there are many people who maintain other ideals in no way diminishes a utilitarian's conviction that his ideal is worthy of acceptance. He believes this because he believes that it is a true interpretation of the moral possibilities of human life; and as such, he believes that it consists of true propositions about what can be done to increase the worth itself of human life, and about what can be done by means of human effort to achieve what is most worth achieving. A person would not seriously oppose Utilitarianism, and so would not reject its moral ideal, unless he looked upon his own moral ideal as a sounder interpretation of the moral possibilities of human life. We seriously oppose only those philosophies which we regard as earnestly attempting to consider propositions which are presumably true; and we seriously defend only propositions which we believe are true. In seriously criticizing any moral philosophy, we do not attack another person's preference; but we contest his philosophy, because we contest the *truth* of its basic premise, and in the case of a moral philosophy, this is a moral ideal.

When we contest a moral ideal which another person affirms, we also contest the moral right of a person to believe what he does about human life. Any person, therefore, who seriously opposes utilitarian moral philosophy, for example, does so because he believes that the basic premise of utilitarian moral philosophy is not a sound analysis of the moral possibilities of human life, specifically in terms of what is most worth achieving, and so what is most worthy of human effort.

Everyone who has some idea about what he regards as most worth achieving by means of effort interprets human life in a way which is potentially a basic premise for a moral philosophy; and it actually would be the premise of a moral philosophy if he were to reflect sufficiently long on his ideal to become aware of its implications. A person, for instance, who disagrees with utilitarian moral philosophy believes that its ideal does not adequately interpret what is most worth achieving. If a person believes that something other than happiness is most worth achieving, he will also believe that something other than the happiness of the greatest number of men is most worth achieving. If, for example, he believes that there are rights in human life which cannot be constricted to the scope of rights to happiness, he will not accept a utilitarian moral philosophy as "factually" sound.

It is a fact, for instance, that there are legally sanctioned ways of acting which we accept as morally right in our society that cannot possibly be defended from the point of view of a utilitarian moral philosophy. A law of New York, for example, limits the amount of money or property which a man can bequeath in his will to charitable or philanthropic institutions when he is survived by his wife or children. According to this law, a man may not leave more than one half of his estate to charities; and if he does, his will may legally be contested. The right of a wife to contest her husband's will, provided more than one half of his estate is left to charities, is certainly not compatible with the utilitarian ideal of what is morally right. According to this ideal, the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the criterion of what is morally right, and so placing a wife's right to her husband's property before the right of philanthropic or charitable organizations, is thus incompatible with the utilitarian ideal.

In other words, if we believe that a man's wife and children have rights which supersede the rights of institutions, we do not also believe that the well-being of the *greatest number* of individuals is *the* criterion of what is morally right. A law which permits a wife to contest a will in which philanthropic institutions are given priority to her own welfare thus takes account of an aspect of human life which is not considered in the ideal that is affirmed in utilitarian moral philosophy.

Any such incompatibility of a law with an ideal does not, of course, necessarily discredit an ideal; but it does confront us with the fact that we look upon a wife and children as having rights which actually supersede the rights of institutions that consist of a greater number of individuals. The principle of number, therefore, is not the sole criterion of which we take account in evaluating the moral rightness of acting; and the fact that we take account of factors other than the number of individuals who benefit from a particular consideration is, consequently, significant in our evaluation of the utilitarian ideal of what is believed to be morally right. Whether the particular law which is here referred to, or the basic premise of utilitarian philosophy, is entitled to our respect, when we cannot accept both, is, of course, a difficult problem; but it is a type of problem with which we are confronted when we look upon moral philosophies as interpretations of what is most worthy of our respect. If a man's wife and his children actually are more entitled to his consideration than are the lives of many persons in an institution, then the utilitarian ideal is indefensible; and we regard it as indefensible because it does not conform to what we regard as a sound analysis of what is morally right. We are perplexed, therefore, when we take account of the fact that a man is *legally* permitted to make gifts without restrictions to charitable institutions during his lifetime, and so without consideration even of his family's rights, although we are not perplexed about any inconsistency in legal practice, since there is no inconsistency in permitting a man to give all of his property to charity during his lifetime, and in restricting the amount he may give in his will. What we are disturbed about is rather the incompatibility of what is *legally authorized* as right, and the *generalization* of a moral philosophy about what is right.

In restricting a man's rights to bequeath all of his estate to philanthropies, consideration is legally given to the rights of those most closely related to him; and this fundamental relation, therefore, takes priority in our laws to the relation which is respected by the Utilitarians as the criterion of moral right. Since we do not deny the fact that a man is related to his family in the most fundamental of human relations, we question the soundness of a moral philosophy which conceives of moral rightness in terms of numbers rather than in terms of such a fundamental or biologically elementary relation. Any person who believes that biologically elementary relations define basic moral rights which are not superseded by other rights, must indeed question the soundness of the utilitarian premise; but he must go even further. He must also reject the utilitarian premise as inadequate for specifying *the criterion* of moral right, since in our legal practice, we take account of rights of which a Utilitarian does not take account in his moral philosophy;

and it is for this reason, that we question the soundness of the ideal which is the basic premise of utilitarian moral philosophies.

It is this same type of consideration which underlies our rejection of all types of egoistic moral philosophies. According to such philosophies, moral rightness is conceived as whatever contributes to an individual's own well-being. According to egoistic moral philosophies, it is morally *right* that an individual should consider his own well-being as most worthy of being achieved by means of his own efforts. What disturbs us, of course, is the conversion of the fact that most men are concerned with their well-being into the moral ideal that this is what is right for all men to do. In being so disturbed, we do not consider the defensibility of the idea that every person has rights to consider his own well-being. We consider only the generalization that it is *always* right that every person should consider his well-being before any other person's. We are disturbed, therefore, by the principle of the priority of every person's own right to every other person's right. We obviously are not disturbed by it because we doubt that this premise reflects our point of view in many circumstances in life, but we are disturbed by it because we do not believe that it actually is the case that in *all* circumstances in human life, every person should consider only himself.

It is, of course, a fact that most men, under most circumstances, consider themselves rather than others; but what is done by most individuals, most of the time, is not the only datum of which account must be taken in thinking of what is most worth doing. We reject the ideal of egoistic moral philosophies because we believe that it ignores the very capacities of human life of which we are aware. We are aware, for instance, that some men do act out of consideration for others; and because we admire them for this type of acting, we reject the egoistic ideal as morally unsound. Since we respect a person who considers others before himself, we cannot respect a philosophy as true which maintains that a person is morally entitled to think of his own rights before the rights of all others.

We respect those who do not conform to the egoistic ideal; and this fact cannot be ignored in evaluating egoistic moral philosophies. We know of firemen who have lost their lives in rescuing people from burning buildings; and we salute them as heroes. We praise officers of the law who lose their lives in pursuing criminals; and we look upon officers of the law as contemptible when they are bought off, and so are deflected from safeguarding the society which employs them. Our indignation about their acting is a moral judgment; and we do not believe that such indignation can satisfactorily be accounted for by an egoist. An egoist maintains, of course, that we are indignant because we do not get the services for which we pay; but the fact that we esteem officers who lose their lives in carrying out their responsibilities cannot be accounted for by an egoistic philosophy. According to such a philosophy, we should have to regard persons as fools who lose their lives in attempting to carry out their assignments. But we do not look upon men as fools who give up their lives in carrying out their offices. We esteem them rather as worthy of respect; and in believing this, we affirm the factual proposition that "They *are* worthy of respect."

We look upon their worthiness to our respect as a property of their lives, or as a feature of their acting; and so our respect for them is our response to what we regard as factual. We regard a property of a person's life as much an object for factual judgments as the properties of a physical object of which we take account in our daily adjustments. In making our adjustments to the social context in which we live, we likewise take account of the fact that there are individuals whom we respect; and the fact that there are some whom we respect for "going beyond the call of duty" implies that we do not look upon socially imposed obligation as the only obligation which we esteem. When we respect a person for imposing upon himself an obligation which may even entail giving up his own life, we reject the premise of every egoistic philosophy as unsound; and insofar as a hedonistic philosophy is a version of egoism, we reject it for the same reason that we reject egoism. We do not reject hedonism because it maintains that pleasure is an aspect of life which is worth seeking, but because it maintains that seeking pleasure is *the* criterion of what is morally right.

A person need not think of himself when he contributes to the pleasure of another. Thus he may act in a way which is inconsistent with the premise of egoisms, and yet not inconsistent with the premise of hedonisms. Although achieving pleasure is worth our efforts, few of us, if any, seriously maintain that devoting our lives to enabling another to enjoy pleasure is the most worthy of all types of living. We believe that there is something else in life which is worth more than pleasure—not only our own, but even another's. Few parents, if any, seriously maintain that they want nothing more in life for their children than their children's pleasures. If parents, for instance, want their children to be enlightened by a literature which is worth reading, they are concerned with something in their children's lives which is other than their children's pleasure. They are concerned with their children's *enlightenment* when they believe that enlightenment is a consideration which supersedes even pleasure, although, of course, it need not be exclusive of it. Although a person reads in order to be enlightened, he, nevertheless, may have pleasure in his reading; but the pleasure which a person enjoys in seeking his enlightenment is not the primary motive for seeking such enlightenment. It is only a consequence of seeking it; and if a person believes this, he cannot agree with a hedonist. A person who believes that there are things with which we are concerned other than our pleasure, or other than the pleasure of others, is not a hedonist because he believes that there are *facts* of which he cannot take account and also maintain a hedonistic philosophy.

When we are confronted by such an incompatibility, we suspect the adequacy of a moral philosophy; and we do not suspect the soundness of our moral evaluation. As a matter of fact, we cannot suspect the latter, since what we respect is itself the criterion by which we evaluate not only acting, but also moral philosophies.

In evaluating moral philosophies, we are concerned with more than consistency. We are concerned with the capacity of a philosophy to take account of facts which we believe constitute test cases for philosophies. A philosophy is looked upon as incompetent which does not adequately interpret a fact, such as acts of self-sacrifice; and the criterion by which we pass this judgment is factual. That is, we disparage the competency of a philosophy because we look upon it as unable to account for facts, the adequacy of whose interpretation is the measure of the worth of a moral philosophy. We believe that although every person has a right to preserve his own life, no person has a right to preserve his own life if in so doing he denies the rights of others to preserve their lives. We therefore reject hedonism because there are facts of which it does not take account.

A fact of which we likewise must take account is that individuals who most vigorously defend egoistic or hedonistic philosophies are the very persons who, as Professor Royce points out, are also most cynical about the worth of life. It is instructive, for instance, that the verse in *Ecclesiastes* which declares, "Whatever my eyes desired, I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure," is followed by the verse, "And behold, all was vanity, and a striving after wind." [2]

We believe that there are facts in human life of which account must be taken if we are to have a factually informed moral philosophy. In wanting such a factually informed philosophy, we want a true philosophy, or a philosophy whose basic premise is true; and the criterion for such truth is factual. For example, we reject moral philosophies as factually unsound when they maintain that *every* motive in human life can be accounted for in terms of the vocabulary of biology; and we reject such philosophies because we believe that there are facts which discredit them. Although we do not clearly understand what accounts for the fact that in the biological "struggle for existence" there are some individuals who lay down their lives for others, we, nevertheless, are aware that there *are* such individuals; and when we think about this fact, we suspect the competency of exclusively "naturalistic" moral philosophies. We see evidence to substantiate the belief that there are determinants of some human acting which are not merely a matter of animal drives, or animal appetites.

A morally serious person believes that a moral philosophy can be helpful when it is sound, and so he wants to consider only sound philosophies; and he believes that philosophies are sound only if they adequately interpret human life. One aspect of such an adequate interpretation is normative. It is what actually *is* most worthy of respect, because most worth striving for in life; and what we want to know is what actually *is* most worth striving for.

After all, we are seriously interested in what we ourselves can respect; and when we take account of this, we find that we have a capacity to respect ideals whose "idealism" is far in excess of some ideals which we defend in "moral" philosophies; and if only we were to think consistently about what we should have to do if we were to be consistent with them, we would have a *light* by which we might enter into a more abundant life.

4. *Criteria of conduct confront us with empirical problems*

When we consider a moral philosophy for its moral usefulness, we are interested not only in *concepts* about moral value, but also in the actual capacity of human life to achieve what is conceived to be morally valuable. Even Kant, for instance, is not interested only in analyzing concepts which are basic to a moral philosophy, but he is also interested in the soundness of these concepts for interpreting human life; and this interest is an empirical concern which is basic to all serious reflecting about moral distinctions.

Since a *theoretical* philosophy is an analysis of concepts, Kant's view is defensible that "all sound theoretical knowledge of duties" should not be "mixed with any anthropology."[3] Yet, Kant is concerned with the capacity of such concepts to analyze human life itself; and so although he carefully distinguishes the scope of a purely *theoretical* philosophy from one which is not purely theoretical, he is, nevertheless, aware that the purpose of thinking through a theoretical moral philosophy is after all "practical." It is contributing to an understanding of the nature of human life, and especially to an understanding of its capacities for achieving what is regarded as most worthy of achieving. Hence the criterion by which Kant measures the actual moral significance of his own analytical moral philosophy is empirical. It is its capacity to interpret the moral aspect of human life; and a moral philosophy is an earnest interpretation of human life only if there are human capacities to do what is conceived as morally worth doing. Kant certainly believes that he analyzes human life when, for instance, he declares: "Pure reason can be practical, that is, can of itself determine the will"; and in affirming this, he maintains that there is a capacity of human life for this specific type of acting.[4]

If there is such an aspect of human life, as Kant affirms, then his affirmation that there is, is true; and it is true not by logical criteria, but by empirical criteria, since it is an informed statement about the nature of human life, provided human life has this capacity. Kant believes that human life has this capacity; and his entire moral philosophy is an attempt to analyze this capacity as essential to human nature. The obviously dated character of the faculty psychology in terms of which he analyzes "human nature" in no way, however, affects the soundness of his belief that there is a human capacity to act in the way which he describes. If any person actually is capable of acting out of respect for an ideal, then what Kant declares about such a capacity is empirically sound, notwithstanding the faculty psychology in terms of which he analyzes this capacity.

Our capacity to think of what is most worth living for, in distinction to what most men may live for, is a "freedom" from the restrictions of actual life; and everyone who believes that it is possible to conceive of such an ideal, agrees with Kant that there is a "property of the will to be a law to itself." [5] Epicurus also believes this, since he is convinced that it is possible to control at least some of the conditions of our lives so that we will have "peace of mind and health of body," such as we would not have if we were not to make an effort to control our lives. The belief that "peace of mind and health of body" can be controlled by human effort is a moral ideal; and any person's ability to think of this way of living is the capacity of which Kant speaks as "freedom of the will."

The belief that men can conceive moral ideals is an interpretation of a particular aspect of human life to which Kant refers in terms of a faculty psychology when he declares: "The *will* is a kind of causality belonging to living beings insofar as they are rational."[6] Kant's belief that men have a capacity to act according to ideals which men impose upon themselves is not a confidence in mere ideas, but it is rather an interpretation of an actual aspect of human life; and as such, it is a description of an actual capacity of human life.

When we reflect about a moral ideal, we think first of all of its realizability; and considering this is taking account of an empirical problem. If any person actually has a capacity to live according to a particular ideal, then there is at least one factually true concept which is basic to the moral philosophy which assumes that there is such a capacity. Believing that it is possible for men to conceive ideals is, of course, not the same as believing that men are capable of living according to their ideals. The capacity to conceive an ideal is one ability; and the capacity to live according to an ideal is something very different. A person's ability to conceive of a way of living which he prefers to the way of living which he has already attained is a capacity which many men have, and any person who believes there is such a capacity in human life, affirms a premise for a moral philosophy. The affirmation that such is the case is, therefore, a factual statement; and since it is presumably factual, we acknowledge that it is capable of being false, and it is this sound point of view of which Kant takes account in speaking about "freedom of the will" as an "hypothesis."[7] Kant does not doubt that there is a capacity in human beings to conceive ideals, but he correctly classifies this belief, or its affirmation, as an hypothesis. We may say: "If there is such a capacity, then we are justified in believing that men actually can conceive of ideal ways of living"; and this is the way Kant argues. He declares: "On the hypothesis, then, of freedom of the will, morality . . . follows."[8] That is, *if* men, or at least some of them, have a capacity to conceive a way of living which is "ideal," in distinction to being "actual," then there is *a factual basis* for our reflecting about morality. If, however, no one has such a capacity, then we are wasting our time in analyzing notions about morality; and this would be the case if there actually were no such aspect of human life as we analyze in a moral philosophy. Every person, however, who seriously reflects about morality believes that something can be achieved by human effort which would not be achieved without such effort; and affirming that there is such a capacity to act is, according to every morally serious person, declaring a factual proposition which can be tested for its truth.

Kant believes that there is such a capacity, even though he maintains that "we could not *prove* (freedom) to be actually a property of ourselves or of human nature."[9] The same, of course, may be said about every other thing whose existence we do not doubt. As Descartes long ago pointed out, we cannot so much as *prove* that there are physical objects; although none of us seriously doubts that there are; and we act as we do, because we believe that there is no reasonable basis for doubting the soundness of our belief. But because we cannot "prove," or logically demonstrate, the existence of a physical world, we, therefore, speak of the *hypothetical* affirmation that there is a physical world; and it is this same type of affirmation which we make about the capacity of human life to think of ideal ways of living, which we classify as "moral ideals."

Some of us, of course, may protest that there is nothing "hypothetical" about the affirmation that we have such a capacity; and in one sense, any person who maintains this is "right," since when anyone is convinced that there is such a capacity, it does seem strange that he should look upon an affirmation that there is, as "hypothetical." Yet, when we realize that it is *we* who are convinced, we also become aware that we are often convinced about something which later on we find is not as we previously thought it was. Just because we are capable of making mistakes, we may well look upon every statement which we believe to be true, as, nevertheless, being "hypothetical"; since there is always the possibility that what we are convinced is true, is not actually true.

Kant, of course, would not have worked so hard to formulate his moral philosophy had he not been convinced that men, or at least some of them, have a capacity both to formulate ideals, and also to live according to them. Every person who seriously reflects about moral philosophies, either his own, or others, is also convinced that at least some men are capable of thinking about possible ways of living which are worth taking seriously. In other words, we do as Kant does: "We . . . ascribe to every being endowed with reason and will this attribute of determining itself to actions under the idea of its freedom." [10]

By "ascribing to men the capacity" to conceive ideals, Kant, of course, does not mean that men are given this capacity by the sheer fiat of affirming that they have such a capacity. He means rather that we must *assume* that men have a capacity to conceive what is worth doing, in contrast to what they may actually do, if we are to consider them as capable of morally controlling their lives.

We may indeed be satisfied that assuming such a capacity is a necessity for formulating a moral philosophy, even though we may wonder about the number of men who have this capacity. We may, therefore, disagree with Kant that "every person who is endowed with reason," or everyone who is capable of reasoning, is also capable of conceiving of a way of living which is worth respecting as a moral ideal. That is, we may doubt the extent of human life, which is capable of affirming morally worthy ideals, and yet not doubt that at least some men have such a capacity. If, however, we doubt that there is such a capacity of human life, then we do not agree with Kant's view about "free will." If, on the other hand, we believe that at least some men have the capacity to live by ideals, then we believe that their acting exemplifies what we are also satisfied to call "free will." But whether there is any person who has the capacity to live by ideals, or as Kant says, "can have (his) law in *nothing but* the mere legislative form of the maxim," is, of course, an empirical problem.[11]

5. *The scope of morality is an empirical problem*

It is easy to define the scope of morality, since this is merely a matter of deciding what we propose to consider as having moral significance. But it is a very different matter to ascertain if our *concept* of morality takes account of all that we ought to consider in the scope of morality; and ascertaining this is specifically an empirical problem.

We believe that only human beings of a certain type are capable of being morally responsible; and in believing this, we do not regard animals, for instance, as morally responsible. Yet in rejecting animals from the category of living things which are morally responsible, we do not necessarily also exclude them from the scope of moral responsibility, since most of us believe that a person is not even morally responsible unless he has a capacity to treat animals with consideration. We, therefore, would even question whether Descartes had a capacity to be morally responsible as we should expect intelligent people to be, since he maintained that animals are not even capable of suffering. The conclusion from his mechanistic philosophy that animals are merely automata is that men need be no more considerate of them than of machines. Some of us may well believe, however, that any one who could maintain a philosophy which implies an interpretation such as this might justifiably be assumed to be incapable of the type of sensitivity which we commonly regard as a condition for morality.

The kindness with which most people treat their pets; feed wild birds; and protect wildlife in game preserves, is evidence that animal life is commonly regarded as coming within the scope of men's responsibility. In believing that men should be mindful of animal life, and should do what they can to diminish its needless suffering, we believe that men have obligations to animals; and in believing this, we do not, of course, also believe that animals are morally responsible. There is no inconsistency in believing that men have responsibilities to animals and in believing that animals have no such responsibility to men. We may, therefore, consistently maintain that animal life comes within the scope of man's moral responsibility, even though animal life is not itself capable of anything comparable to what we regard as moral responsibility.

We are, in fact, amused when we read accounts of animals being treated as if they were responsible for their behavior. We are amused, for instance, by a twelfth century bishop who excommunicated caterpillars in his diocese for "incontinence." We likewise are amused by a fifteenth century court trial of a mother pig and her litter, in which the mother pig was sentenced to death for killing a child, whereas the litter was acquitted on the ground that it was not responsible for its mother's "bad example."

Although we are amused by attempts to hold animals accountable on the same grounds as men are held morally accountable, we find no comparable humor in men's regard for animals as entitled to the most considerate treatment of which men are capable. We are, in fact, sobered by the profundity of a Vishnu teaching that men should be respectful for the well-being of *all* living creatures "in this world and the next." The very notion of animals being included in the range of life which has significance enough in the world to live again, impresses us as a mark, not of naiveté, but of deep spirituality. We are likewise inclined not to scoff, but to respect, the injunction in the *Koran* that men should be considerate of animals because "they are people like unto yourselves, and unto God must their souls return."

Men's capacity to comprehend animal life in the scope of men's responsibility is one measure of men's morality. We are, therefore, confronted with a specifically empirical problem when we consider which life has a right to be included in the scope of men's moral responsibility; and this specific problem is one aspect of the further problem of what constitutes the scope of a morally responsible person's consideration. In facing this problem, we are not merely considering what we propose as the range of morally serious consideration. We inquire rather into the responsibility with which we are faced in ascertaining what *is* the extent of reality of which we must take account if we are to be mindful of all of which we morally ought to take account. We are confronted with an empirical problem for instance in being aware that Mohammed maintained that men are as responsible for their treatment of animals as they are for their treatment of human life, on the ground that animals have souls as men do. In other words, we are faced with the problem whether Mohammed is "right" in maintaining that animals have souls, or whether Cartesians are "right" in denying that they do. If the proposition affirmed by Mohammed is true, then the proposition which is affirmed by the Cartesians cannot be; and if it is the case that animals are entitled to men's consideration for the reason which is affirmed in the *Koran,* or in the Vishnu Purana, then Descartes and his followers are totally mistaken in what they think about animals.

The moral issue which is at stake in this consideration is the truth or falsity of an affirmation about the scope of men's responsibility. If it is the case that men are as responsible for animal life as they are for human life, then men who deny this maintain an unsound premise as the basis of their own moral philosophies. Ascertaining, however, the scope of life which is morally entitled to respectful consideration is an empirical problem, since it is a matter of ascertaining if it is the case that animals actually have rights such as many scriptures affirm they have. There is, for instance, no principle more "self-evident" for the Hindu than the right of animals to respect by every morally responsible person; and so whether what is regarded as so evident by Hindus actually is soundly so regarded, is an empirical issue; and it is not merely a matter of preference.

A person who is concerned with the soundness of a premise of a moral philosophy is interested in the truth of a proposition. That is, he is interested in finding out whether what is affirmed actually reports, or does not report, a state of affairs. Thus we consider an empirical issue when we consider what constitutes the scope of man's responsibility, since it is a matter of ascertaining the range of reality which has the right to be considered by a morally responsible person as confronting him with moral obligations.

No two propositions could be more obviously contrary than the injunction affirmed by Mohammed that animals have rights as men do, and the affirmation made by the moral philosopher, Sidgwick, that men have rights to use animals as "means to ends" which men seek. In maintaining that "brutes" are rightly perfected for men's use, as "objects of scientific or aesthetic contemplation," Sidgwick affirms a premise in his moral philosophy which would be morally repugnant to a vast range of human life throughout the world.

Our primary concern, however, in our morally serious reflecting is not with what Sidgwick, or Descartes, or any other philosopher maintains, but with the justification, or lack of justification, for their beliefs. In being so concerned, we may have little, if any, hope that we will be able to settle this problem by consulting what other philosophers think. The East and the West, for instance, will never meet on some issues; and the issues on which they will never meet are, according to morally serious persons, the most important issues. The East can easily learn to use the machinery which has been invented in the West; but there is little evidence that the Western World will learn what the ancient East is able to teach it—and for moral reasons! Most of us look upon people as "backward" who regard animals as entitled to considerations comparable with considerations to which human life is morally entitled; but our very judgment about their "backward" character is itself a premise of our moral philosophies, and so is itself a point of view which sets limits to the very type of moral philosophy which we are capable of maintaining when we reflect enough to formulate a moral philosophy.

Notwithstanding what most of us think about the relation of morally responsible human life to animal life, there, nevertheless, is such a problem by virtue of the fact that we are related to animals no less than we are related to men. The question, however, of morally serious individuals is which of the relations that constitute the vast context in which men live should be regarded as confronting men with *moral* responsibilities.

In reflecting on moral responsibility, the scope of concern in the Western World has been traditionally confined to human life. With rare exceptions, such as Plutarch and Schweitzer, moral philosophers in the Western World simply have not considered the same scope of reality as has the East in defining the range of moral responsibility for men. In being aware of this radical difference, we, therefore, cannot help but wonder who is right. We cannot help but wonder who actually takes account of what is morally entitled to be considered in reflecting on the range of moral responsibility; and reflecting about this is considering an empirical issue: It is which type of life has the rights that morally serious persons *should* consider in taking account of their responsibilities.

6. *Means to achieve moral ends confront us with empirical problems*

Although we may agree on the moral end which is worth achieving, we may not agree on the means by which it can be achieved. We may, for instance, agree that self-realization is a moral end, and yet we may differ on what we regard as the means to achieve it.[12] In fact, we cannot be fully aware of what is entailed in achieving "self-realization" until we progressively achieve it, and in the progressive achievement of it, we progressively comprehend more and more of what it is to which we aspire. In one sense, we will never entirely be able to comprehend what we can do until we have done it, because our capacities to understand what we can do must themselves be developed before we can comprehend what we can do.

We may agree that the cultivation of the capacities for living is a moral objective, or even *the* moral objective; and yet we cannot clearly comprehend at any time in our lives just which capacities for living are the specific ones which constitute the conditions for the quality of living which actually is most worth desiring. We clarify our objectives as we achieve them; and the objectives which we achieve enable us to comprehend objectives which in turn transcend them. As we learn to write, for example, we also learn how we can write; and we learn thereby what we may expect of ourselves in future writing. We may each demand of himself that he shall write more clearly than he wrote previously; and yet we cannot anticipate just what this greater clarity will be until we have developed capacities for writing more clearly.

We cannot describe in detail what we shall become, because we cannot know this until we have actually fulfilled the conditions to achieve the objectives to which we aspire. Only when we have achieved an objective for which we have earnestly striven are we prepared to conceive of another which shall transcend it, and transcend it in the very qualities which we desire as morally significant, even though we are not fully aware of what they may be. We may well develop capacities which have relatively little resemblance to our previous undeveloped capacities, but at any time in our lives, our ideas of a future quality of life are conditioned by the quality of life we have already attained. We may go beyond ourselves in the sense that we may develop capacities in a future which we have not yet developed; but the significance which these anticipated capacities may have for us in the future is always conceived within the limits of the capacities we have already cultivated.

In a sense, therefore, we are not even able to appreciate the full significance of the moral ideals which we affirm as our objectives in a future; and this does not imply that we are incapable of understanding what we believe about the ideals which we affirm. It means only that before we have developed the capacities for such achievement, the extent of our understanding of their moral worth is as limited as are our capacities to comprehend the quality of life we shall achieve by means of such ideals. What we can do is something of which none of us is entirely aware. We often do not know what we *can* do until we are called upon to do it. And we do not even know what occasions may arise in our future which may provide the circumstances that will call forth abilities of which we are not even aware.

What people actually can do is something which cannot entirely be anticipated; and because it cannot be anticipated, a person cannot have a *detailed* concept of what "self-realization" actually is. Few of the people whom we esteem as heroes have included their own heroism among the foreseeable achievements in their lives. Yet, insofar as they actually were capable of doing what we esteem as heroic, they were capable of noteworthy moral achievements notwithstanding the fact that they themselves had no notion of their capacities for such achievements. We may indeed have a notion of heroic acting; but being a person who does what is heroic is the flesh and blood which clothes our most naked notions of what a hero is. We may be confident that there are doors in life upon which we may some day have to knock; but until we knock at these doors, we simply cannot comprehend what they are. And, furthermore, we cannot be aware of what we ourselves shall be in the act in which we knock. We cannot, in other words, anticipate the quality of life to which we ourselves may some day attain until we have done what enables us to attain it; and doing this is making a moral decision, whose significance in terms of its effect upon the quality of our life, and upon our character, is something we cannot fully comprehend. We cannot ascertain what a person can do unless we are also informed of factors which have bearing upon his possible acting; and it is just this which we cannot entirely know. What we each may now regard as "self-realization" is, therefore, only an abstract notion in comparison with what it may some day be as a result of our earnest efforts.

We may earnestly seek to realize the richest possible life of which we are capable; but what this type of life will be in our own case is something we cannot fully understand.

We cannot understand it because we are not prepared to comprehend more of what is morally significant than the capacities we have developed for such comprehending. Yet, the very objective of our earnest moral living is developing capacities to comprehend what is worthy of us. We cannot, however, fully comprehend what is included in what we mean by "ourselves," because we change in the course of our moral effort. The measure of earnest effort is, in fact, the extent to which the morally earnest self changes, and changes in its capacity to comprehend what is morally significant. No morally earnest person, therefore, can fully comprehend what the moral ought will be for him in any specific situation in a future, because as he morally prepares for such a future situation, his capacities to meet it also change in a way which is progressively more worthy of him. What a person may regard as morally worthy in a future circumstance of acting may even be very different from what he will regard as morally worthy when he is morally more prepared for such a situation.

No morally serious person would even want to be able to specify exactly what he will do in a future situation, because the moral objective of his life is learning all he can about what he should do; and every learning achievement contributes something to the fund with which a person lives. As the fund increases, the competency of a person's judgments about what is morally worthy also increases. The very moral justification for the effort we expend in learning is that the moral competency of our decisions will be increased by our learning. Although we agree, for example, that we are morally responsible to others, and are responsible for doing what we can do for their welfare, yet what is included in doing all that we can for their welfare is a matter which we can find out only in the course of learning what will contribute to their welfare.

We may likewise sincerely believe that men have a right to work in order to support their families; and yet we may not presume to know how this right is most effectively secured. The efforts of men on behalf of human rights have many times turned out to be ineffective ways to secure objectives which in moral theory were esteemed as eminently worthy. An objective which is abstracted from the concrete means for achieving it is often very different from what actually is achieved by the concrete means which are selected to achieve it.

We may likewise agree in principle that all people are entitled to health, and, therefore, have a moral right to receive the advantage of physicians' care and hospital services. Yet, when it comes down to proposing ways to secure such benefits, we are confronted by some of the most perplexing of moral issues with which we now wrestle. We do not doubt that people have a right to be given the benefit of available medical services, and yet we may have the greatest doubts about the effectiveness of certain means to provide such benefit. Because some may doubt the effectiveness of socialized medicine, for example, this certainly does not imply that they also deny the right of people to a health which is secured through medical science. The means by which medical services can be made available for the benefit of people is indeed a grave moral problem. We may agree that a society is responsible for the health of its children, and yet have no agreement whatever on the means which are most effective to secure such health. We may likewise agree that some agency is responsible for caring for those who cannot care for themselves; but after reaching this agreement, we may be very far from agreement about the means to achieve what we agree should be achieved. In this case, as in all others where we are divided about means, we are also very much divided about the *actual* ends which we believe should be achieved. The means employed for achieving an end "determine" the end achieved by such means. In defending socialized medicine, for example, as the means for providing health services to those who cannot provide them for themselves, we subscribe to much more than a particular aspect of charity. We endorse a method which entails an entire way of living in a country. We know what is meant by saying that after the camel's nose is in a tent, the camel itself is soon in the tent. This maxim expresses our realistic awareness that the means which we approve to secure an end may involve consequences which we do not approve, and which we do not even believe are compatible with the end which we approve. A morally earnest person, therefore, is constantly faced with the problem of learning all that he can about the means by which morally worthy ends of acting can actually be achieved; and learning this is not a matter of moral theory, but is rather a matter of moral practice.

Chapter VIII

THE FACTUAL SCOPE OF AN EMPIRICAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY

1. *An empirical moral philosophy takes account of what men are*

An idea of what men should be, in contrast to what men are, is a moral ideal; and an analysis of such an ideal may itself constitute a moral philosophy. When an ideal of what men should be, however, takes insufficient account of what men are, it has little, if any, actual moral value. The moral value of an ideal is its effectiveness for helping men to operate upon their lives for the purpose of taking maximum advantage of their capacities for enriching human life. This procedure of taking account of their actual capacities is empirical, in contrast to the procedure merely of analyzing what is included in the ideal of what life should be.

There are two minimum conditions for any moral achievement. One is an ideal of what might be done that actually will contribute to the enrichment of life; and the other is an informed inventory of capacities for achieving such an enrichment. One detail in such an inventory is considering the relation between human life and animal life. Any person who is intelligent enough to reflect on human life must certainly be aware of the correlations between aspects of human life and aspects of animal life. In studying embryology, for example, a person cannot help but be impressed with the structural correlations of human and animal bodies; and in studying experimental psychology, he likewise cannot help but be impressed with striking similarities between animal and human responses.

The elementary equipment of human life is animal, consisting of capacities for surviving, just as does the elementary equipment of animals. A hunger impulse, for example, which drives some men to get food irrespective of how they get it differs in no respect from the animal impulse to do the same. Whatever differences there may be between such elementary responses of animals and men are a matter entirely of what men have learned to do that animals have not learned to do. In maintaining this, we thus agree with Confucius, who declared: "That whereby men differ from animals is little. Most men throw it away. The superior man preserves it."

The fact that men have many capacities and requirements in common with animals must be acknowledged in any adequate inventory of human life. Such an inventory must likewise take account of aspects of human life which are not shared in common with animals; and ascertaining which these aspects are, is a sobering problem in any investigation of human life.

There is no analytical method for comparing or contrasting men and animals. Their similarities and differences can be ascertained only by empirical methods. Socrates no doubt would have taken advantage of Freud's investigations had he been able to do so, since he believed that the only sound basis for a moral philosophy is a knowledge of everything with which men must work in morally directing the capacities and resources of their lives.

One empirical procedure for taking inventory of human life which has widespread precedent today is consulting biologists and animal psychologists for an interpretation of the elementary materials with which men must work in attempting to enrich human life by "moral methods." No person who is trained in scientific psychologies would, for instance, assume that what is known about animal responses in learning is without value for understanding the most elementary principles of human learning. Yet, many people who presume to philosophize about human morality, treat human life as if it were unique in *all* respects, and in no way were related to animal life. If, however, no such radical distinction is made in our scientific studies, there is no sound reason that it should be made in our moral philosophies. An empirical moral philosophy should reflect scientific procedures; and so it should acknowledge that there is no radical discontinuity between animal and human behavior, and so no *radical* duality of animal and human life.

Many of our elementary responses are comparable with the responses of animals; and in acknowledging this, we agree with the fundamental point of view of scientific psychologies. Yet, in maintaining that there are some activities of some men for which there are no observable parallels in animal life, we do not contradict our scientific psychologies, since we speak about aspects of human life which are not features of animal responses.

We do not believe, for example, that there is any physiological difference in the type of sleep which men experience, and the type of sleep which animals experience. We look upon sleep rather as a physiological response which is shared by both men and animals; and yet, we do not treat the sleep of men as we treat the sleep of animals. Under some circumstances, we hold men morally accountable for sleeping. We do not, for example, believe that a person is entitled to fall asleep while driving a car.

If men were always to do what animals do, we would, in fact, have no human morality; but we would have only another expression of animal existence. And if this were the case, we could not even say that it is not "right" that men are held accountable for falling asleep when they are supposed to stay awake, because in saying this, we would be using a moral category. That is, we cannot judge a practice either as right or wrong, except by a moral standard; and we furthermore cannot seriously cite such a standard unless we believe there is justification for defending such a standard.

We make a *moral* judgment when we maintain that it is not *right* to hold a person accountable for sleeping when he drives a car. Although there is no inconsistency in making a judgment of accountability upon particular instances of such behavior, there certainly is an inconsistency in doing so if we maintain that it is not morally right to make *any* such judgment. If, however, any person maintains that there is no difference between men's and animals' capacities for living, then he must also believe that no uniquely moral distinctions are *ever* justifiably made.

Although we believe that there is evidence that some men do what no animals can do, we, nevertheless, are not always entirely clear about just what we refer to when we maintain this. We know of dogs which show loyalty to their masters, such as occurs only in the most extraordinary instances of human life. We could, in fact, enumerate so many instances of such loyalty that we sometimes wonder if there is even a comparable parallel in human life; and yet, we must acknowledge that there is no evidence in animal life for some of the loyalty which some men show in devoting their entire lives to helping others. Being loyal under some circumstances is one thing; but being loyal as *a way of living* is another thing; and it is loyalty as *a way of living* which is a feature of human life for which there is most likely no parallel among animals. Human mothers, for instance, may nurse their young as animal mothers nurse their young; but it is safe to believe that no animal mother is so consistently devoted to her young as some human mothers are; and in making comparisons and contrasts such as this, we certainly hesitate to speak about *all* human mothers and *all* animal mothers, since we know too well about the sad record of some human mothers who show neither love nor loyalty to their own children.

Insofar, however, as there are parallels between animal and human life, we must take account of them, just as we must take account of any fundamental differences between them. Taking account of such data is an empirical procedure; and the purpose for using this procedure is that we might acquire a knowledge which we could not otherwise acquire. If we are interested in knowing all that we can about human life for which we propose some ideals, then we must also be aware that no ideals are morally worth more than their effectiveness to direct human life. We are, therefore, often perplexed about which aspect of animal life is only a parallel to a *morally* significant aspect of human life, and which aspect of animal life is actually identical with an aspect of human life. This problem cannot be resolved merely by considering a moral philosophy, but it can be resolved, if at all, only by the most careful scrutiny of both types of life; and the method for doing this is empirical. It is comparing where comparisons are factually justified; and contrasting where there is factual evidence that there are differences: it is a fact, for instance, that dogs express what we classify as "shame responses." A dog which does what it has been taught not to do, shows responses which are comparable to the responses which a man shows who breaks a rule that he has been taught is a social requirement. Just how much there is in common to these two types of responses which cannot be observed is, however, something which cannot even be ascertained by observation. We may, of course, conjecture about what is comparable, and about what is not, but we must always be aware that in doing so we venture a conjecture.

Conjecturing is not observing; and what cannot be observed, but is conjectured, has a status which may not justifiably be classified as "fact." It may be presumed to be factual; but presuming that something is factual is taking a point of view which may not be free from error. Due, therefore, to the limitations of empirical methods for investigating some types of problems, we may not be too confident either that the shame responses of animals are *fundamentally* the same as the shame responses in human life, or that they are only superficially the same. If they are fundamentally the same, then we would indeed *not* be justified to maintain that the shame responses in men are expressions of a "human conscience," whereas the shame responses in animals are merely expressions of "conditioned responses."

Any person who maintains that habit conditioning alone explains the "shame responses" of animals would certainly have no empirical basis for maintaining that shame responses in men express a "conscience" which is unique to human life. If, on the other hand, there is no evidence that a shame response is unique to men, there likewise is no evidence that the cause for such a response is unique to men. We certainly can not reasonably infer from the fact of human shame responses that there is a human conscience which accounts for them, without also inferring that there is an "animal conscience" which accounts for the shame responses of animals.

Since we believe that some men accept self-imposed requirements as the moral authorities by which they live, whereas no animal does this, so far as we know, we believe that there is a fundamental distinction between human and animal life; and this difference is not a matter of an *innate* conscience. We may agree with Locke that there is no empirical evidence for an *innate* conscience; and yet, we are also aware that men look upon themselves as responsible for what they do; and looking upon themselves in this way is itself a condition for a uniquely human morality. But this way of regarding themselves is not innate. It is chosen. Men choose to live as men, and not as animals; and in so choosing, they become different from animals.

The fact that there is much which men have in common with animals in no way alters the fact that the *moral* aspect of human life is unique to human life. Some men impose a responsibility upon themselves to use their capacities not only for their survival, but also for the enhancement of the quality of their own and others' lives; and this is a uniquely human act. All life that is classified as "human" certainly does not exemplify this self-imposed moral responsibility in the same way; and much so-called "human life" apparently does not exemplify it in any very appreciable way. Yet, insofar as any people exemplify this trait which animals do not exemplify, their acting is justifiably classified as uniquely "human"; and the basis upon which this classification is made can empirically be investigated.

2. *An empirical moral philosophy includes a consideration of evidence in support of moral ideals*

There are relatively few people who are not in some way considerate of others. Although the extent of their consideration differs, most people, nevertheless, think of someone's well-being other than their own; and this fact is of utmost importance in a moral philosophy which maintains that a consideration for others' well-being is a moral ideal, rather than a mere fiction. There is abundant evidence of consideration for the welfare of others even in our culture, which also offers so much evidence for a disregard for others' rights. We need only mention, as has already been done in this book, the gigantic structure of life insurance in this country, in order to point out a fact of utmost significance for a moral philosophy which is concerned with ideals that are realizable. Millions of men carry life insurance, and their acceptance of this financial burden is an indication of the capacity of people to take account of the welfare of others, even though such a consideration adds to their own economic burdens. Any moral philosophy, therefore, which maintains that the only reason that any person does anything is that it presumably contributes to his own pleasure, would have to turn conceptual cart wheels in order to account for this single aspect of widespread practice.

Children in our culture are gravely handicapped when they are not able to continue their schooling; and providing for their schooling by means of life insurance is one way to discharge at least one moral responsibility which a parent has to his children. What is significant here is not a preachment that fathers *should* do this. It is rather the *fact* that millions of fathers do it.

The fact that this type of consideration for children is widespread in our culture should not, however, be stressed as evidence that a consideration of moral responsibility for children is highly developed in our culture. No other inference need be made from the fact that there are annuities, trusts, and insurances than that there is at least this much consideration for others. The long-range planning for the welfare of others by means of life insurance alone is, however, a significant fact in substantiating the premise of a moral philosophy that men are capable of anticipating the future, and are capable of doing what they can in the present to cope with anticipated events which affect the well-being of others.

Even the practice of carrying insurance on oneself, so that money is available for one's own burial expenses, expresses the type of consideration for others which is affirmed in this book as a type of moral responsibility. A person who anticipates his own death, and who prepares for the financial aspect of such an inevitable occurrence, assumes an obligation which relieves others of assuming this responsibility. Even if there were no other way to express consideration for others than is provided by the fact of insurances, annuities, and trusts, what is regarded in this book as a person's acceptance of moral responsibility would be amply justified.

A basic concern in the *theory* of an empirical moral philosophy is that there is evidence that moral ideals which are affirmed are also capable of being achieved. An ideal, for instance, that men should take account of the welfare of others is exemplified in the widespread practices of life insurance, health insurance, trusts, annuities—to mention only some of the more common means for exercising consideration for the welfare of others. Anticipating financial needs in the future, and doing something to make money available when it is needed, is an expression *in practice* of what is affirmed *in theory* as a moral ideal. This expression of consideration for others is thus significant, because it constitutes evidence that the type of consideration which is described as an essential condition for morality is actually widespread in practice.

The fact is morally significant that the type of life with which we are acquainted already exhibits in so many ways the very types of acting which we affirm as moral ideals. Some aspects of our practice provide evidence that what we assume in theory is already exemplified in fact; and that what is conceived as an ideal which is worthy of our respect is already exemplified in our lives.

The fact that we show many considerations for the welfare of others demonstrates in our practice that our idealism in moral philosophies is not opposed to our capacities. Consideration for others, for instance, is maintained in altruistic moral philosophies as an essential condition for morality; and common practice provides abundant evidence that altruistic philosophies are not reflections about fictions, but about facts. It is a fact that great numbers of people are capable of anticipating the needs of others in the future, and are willing to accept many burdensome cares as their responsibilities in order to do what they can to cope with such anticipated needs. The fact that men prepare for the future of their famiiles is itself sufficient evidence that what is maintained as a basic condition for moral responsibility is realizable, because it *is* realized in the type of life with which we are already acquainted.

Reflecting, therefore, about the quality of life which could be achieved if men were to be consistent in their consideration for the welfare of others is only extending the scope of common practice. The fact, for instance, that we do what is specified in an altruistic moral philosophy as a condition for morality is empirical evidence that such a type of philosophy is informed of practice. Many people, for example, are members of organizations whose purpose is to care for others. The fact that there are millions of children throughout the world who suffer from hunger and sickness is of intense concern to millions of Americans; and what is *morally* significant is that there are many organizations in this country which are supported for the explicit purpose of helping these children. Committees for Overseas Relief, which are sponsored by many agencies of government and religious institutions, alone constitute evidence that the concern for others is not a "speculative" ideal. It is rather an ideal which actually is exemplified in life. Although it may not be exemplified as consistently as we wish it were, yet, the fact that it *is* exemplified even in one aspect of our lives, indicates that *in principle* we are capable of thinking of others' welfare, and are *in principle* capable of sacrificing for others.

The fact that millions of people contribute to organizations whose purpose is to help the oppressed and needy of other continents is empirical evidence which discredits consistent egoistic moral philosophies. Insofar as people are concerned with the hunger and suffering of children throughout the world, these people do not think about their own satisfaction in contributing to organizations which provide food and medicine for these suffering children.

Many people are members of civic and fraternal organizations which support charitable causes; and this is a fact of utmost significance for a moral philosophy. If there were only one instance in practice of a moral ideal, *that* ideal at least would be empirically substantiated. Yet, the *fact* that an ideal is exemplified once, indicates that it is *in principle* capable of being exemplified; and the possibility for such exemplification is itself a fundamental condition for a *moral* ideal. Hence, when men's acting exemplifies what they affirm as moral ideals, the fact of such exemplification is a source of encouragement. It encourages any person who maintains that an ideal which is worthy of being a determinant of practice actually is a determinant of practice. When once realized in practice, the "realizability" of an ideal is, therefore, no longer a *theoretical* issue.

Some of the most protracted of discussions in moral philosophies, however, are about the realizability of ideals. A consistent egoistic moral philosophy, for instance, maintains that the ideal of benevolence, which is affirmed in altruistic philosophies, is not capable of determining actual practice; and this is also maintained by all people who believe that men are incapable of being concerned with the welfare of others, unless such concern gives evidence of contributing to their own welfare. When, therefore, millions of people give to causes which in no way promise any direct, or even indirect, advantage for themselves, we are confronted by *facts* which we cannot ignore in our moral theories. Any person, therefore, who believes that men are capable of considering others, and are willing to put the consideration for others before any consideration for themselves, also believes that philosophical egoisms are incompetent, because they do not take account of empirical data, which must, however, be considered in evaluating the soundness of an egoistic ideal.

We individually may not be satisfied that our own support of charitable causes is all that it should be; and our dissatisfaction with what we ourselves do, when measured in light of what we believe we can do, is a morally significant experience. We disapprove of what we do, because we are aware of what we might do; and what we regard as possible, even though we do not do it, is thus a tacit condemnation of what we do which is less than what we are aware is worth doing. When, for example, we do not contribute to a cause which we believe is worthy of support, we are dissatisfied with ourselves; and this dissatisfaction cannot be fully analyzed in terms of a hedonistic philosophy, which considers only achieving pleasure or avoiding unpleasant experiences.

A person who believes that a cause is worthy of his support, and yet withholds his support, is confronted with the *fact* that he is the kind of person who can do what he himself cannot approve. A person, however, who is not even aware of such a disparity between what he does, and what he recognizes is worth doing, is not, in fact, even capable of moral idealism.

When any moral idealism, such as is analyzed in a moral philosophy, is substantiated by what is done in daily practice, then a moral philosophy is "realistic" in the sense that the ideal it analyzes as the norm of what is worth achieving is actually capable of being achieved; and its achievability is maintained not as theory, but as fact. This factual basis for moral idealism is thus itself a criterion for the moral soundness of any ideal, since only an ideal which can be realized is worthy of the serious consideration of a morally earnest person. Hence when there is any evidence that an ideal which is affirmed as worthy of approval is actually exemplified in practice, a person finds empirical justification for his respect for such an ideal.

A morally serious person respects an ideal only when he believes that it constitutes a way of living which is worthy of human effort, and when he observes a way of living which exemplifies such an ideal, he is assured that such an ideal is not tangential to life. It is rather an interpretation of actual capacities of human life; and it is such actual capacities of human life with which any person is concerned who formulates a moral philosophy about human life, in distinction to fabricating a philosophy about some fiction, which is misnamed a "moral" ideal.

Many incidents in human life exemplify the finest type of moral idealism. Social workers go into communities of the lowest conceivable standards of living, and by devoted efforts, convert such "deserts into gardens which blossom as the rose." This ideal which is affirmed in Scripture is, therefore, illustrated whenever a context is changed in a way which contributes to an enrichment of the quality of human life. A social worker, for instance, once persuaded every person in one of the most depressing of slums to plant a tree or flower in his own yard, and thereby he helped to convert a slum from ugliness into some degree of beauty. Achieving this much demonstrates both the moral effectiveness of human devotion to an ideal, and also the realizability of an ideal which is worthy of such devoted effort.

There are many ways in which many people have devoted their lives for the enrichment of the lives of others which are less dramatic than what often makes the headlines. Countless artists have devoted their lives to enriching human life; and the fact that they have struggled in poverty, without approbation or encouragement, confronts us with one type of sacrifice of life for others. We ourselves may not be expressions of this type of life, but others *are;* and we individually would be morally benefited if we were to be aware of this fact, and were to give some attention to it. We would then see what *can* be done; and so we would become aware of what the capacities of human life actually are.

The capacities for living of which we are aware, on the basis of what we ourselves do, may very well discourage most of us; and the *fact* that so many of us are so discouraged, and so pessimistic about human life, may be accounted for by the fact that we confine our attention to what is morally discouraging. Yet, the fact that there are those who do what is worthy of respect, even though we ourselves do not, is one source of moral encouragement which none of us can afford to pass up. In becoming aware that there is no radical disparity between what moral idealism affirms as morally normative, and what some men have done, we realize that moral ideals are not pinings for the moon, but are reminders to us of what can be done that is worth doing. Hence, when we see an ideal exemplified in actual practice, we are encouraged to believe in the ideal on the evidence of practice.

Many people believe in ideals, and achieve them in practice; but the person who believes in no ideals, and so achieves nothing in practice which approximates any ideal which is worth mentioning, might be greatly helped by opening his eyes, and so enabling himself to see what *can* be done. What others do, indicates what can be done. What many people do, often isn't worth doing; and in giving our entire attention to this aspect of human life, we see only evidence for the poverty of human life. We see, in other words, what Emerson speaks of as "the almshouse of the world." But if we were also to do what Emerson did, and read Plutarch's account of the lives of some famous men who are worthy of esteem, we would take notice of what is not included in the almshouse of the world; and we would thereby take account of empirical evidence which would enable us to get a notion of another aspect of the "real" world.

Meanness, cruelty, depravity, and hatred constitute one aspect of the human record. There is, however, another aspect of the human record. There are good men who do all that has been affirmed in the most uplifting of moral ideals. There are men who give their lives to bring justice into the world. There are men who give their lives to create a world in which differences can be resolved by arbitration, and not by the futile methods to which most of us subscribe.

Spinoza was encouraged by the fact that there is no instance of vindictiveness in the Gospel account. Hence he learned of the possibility of living without malice by seeing that others live without malice. In singling out one person from among millions who exemplifies what we ourselves most esteem, we have a basis for our confidence in what human life can be. We scarcely need mention the fact that countless people have been encouraged to believe in the goodness of life by means of the Gospel record of Jesus. Jesus' demonstration of the realizability of the abundant life is a substantiation of his faith that there is a "light" which is capable of enlightening the life of everyone who comes into the world.

In being grateful to Jesus, for instance, for what he achieved in bringing the possibilities of human life to such a consistent level of understanding, charity, and mercy, we need not be sectarian or provincial to such an extent that we are unaware of countless others to whom we must also be grateful. The prophetic record in the Old Testament was itself a source of encouragement which was influential in the life of Jesus. Hence, we cannot take full account of the life of Jesus without also taking account of centuries of moral idealism to which the Old Testament prophets bear witness. But we need not confine ourselves to the Bible in taking an inventory of the sources for our encouragement. We certainly cannot ignore the laws of Manu, which express a moral idealism centuries before Jesus, and are likewise uninfluenced by the prophetic tradition in the Bible.

One aspect of a moral philosophy is considering evidence for ideals which are worthy of men's respect. The fact, therefore, that a way of living which is affirmed as an ideal is exemplified in human life, is of utmost importance for any person who formulates a moral philosophy for the purpose of clarifying the possibilities of human life. A person, therefore, who is earnestly interested in the possibilities of human life, is also interested in what some men have done, provided that what they have done is an exemplification of what one himself regards as most worthy of doing.

What a person regards as most worthy of doing is his moral ideal; and when he sees his ideal exemplified, he has a warranted basis for his confidence that this ideal is realizable. A most important step in being encouraged about moral possibilities is becoming aware of such evidence; and we all need such encouragement. We need it whether or not we formulate a moral philosophy; but we simply are not qualified to formulate a moral philosophy, which is informed of what human life is capable of becoming, unless we take account of what human life *is*. And in taking account of achievements which are worthy of esteem, we consider evidence for a *reasoned* moral faith. Thus what is already done that is worthy of esteem, constitutes one basis upon which we rest our faith in what can be done that is worth doing.

3. *An empirical moral philosophy takes account of investigations in the empirical sciences*

An empirical moral philosophy depends upon empirical sciences, such as biology, psychology, and sociology, for an understanding of human life. This dependence thus constitutes a fundamental difference between an empirical moral philosophy and a strictly analytical moral philosophy. Only ideals about human life which are capable of being investigated may be considered in an empirical moral philosophy as significant interpretations of human life. Ideals, for example, about sex relations in human life have long been maintained; and they have been maintained as binding upon human life long before investigations were conducted for ascertaining their soundness, in the sense of ascertaining if they actually are means for enabling human beings to achieve well-being. Some ideals about sex relations, however, could not be known to be *sound* proposals about means for achieving well-being until researches were conducted by the methods of psychoanalysis. Other ideals could not be known to be sound until researches were conducted in physiology. Professor Tsanoff, therefore, affirms a sound rule of procedure in formulating an empirical moral philosophy when he declares: "The physical and the mental hygiene in sex relations illustrate the need of scientific factual basis in ethical discussion."[1]

A person who wants to understand human life must consult the most dependable sources of knowledge which are available to him. He must, in other words, take account of what scientific studies have contributed to an understanding of human life. The Department of Labor, for instance, publishes *The Monthy Labor Review*, which considers some aspects of public health. The Treasury Department publishes *Reports of the Public Health Service,* which consider other aspects of public health; and The Department of Labor publishes *Reports of the Children's Bureau,* which consider still other aspects of public health. A person needs to mention only some of the reports of this type which are published by government agencies in order to be aware of the extensive studies which are made about just one aspect of human life, in which anyone must have an interest who is seriously concerned in an empirical moral philosophy. Health is one aspect of human well-being; and taking account of the means by which it can be attained and maintained is thus one aspect of serious reflecting on morality.

An ideal is morally helpful only when it interprets what actually can be done that will contribute to human well-being. Ascertaining what is capable of doing this, however, comes within the scope of investigations not only of moral philosophers, but also of scientists. Unless a philosopher, therefore, knows of investigations of empirical scientists into the effects upon human life of some types of ideals, he is not even qualified to defend particular ideals as morally sound. Some ideals of duty, for instance, induce anxiety, and so may be classified as "anxiety-inducers." [2] Such ideals, therefore, are inimical to well-being.

Ascertaining which ideals are incapable of contributing to well-being is one obligation of a moral philosopher; and for ascertaining this, he must consult scientific studies about the effects of types of ideals upon human life. This consists of two considerations. It includes a consideration of the scientific competency of the studies themselves; and it includes an estimate of the significance of their results for ascertaining the actual moral worth of ideals. If, for instance, a person were to believe that the methods which are employed in investigating the correlations between ideals and anxiety-states are not "scientific," he would not seriously consider such investigations in evaluating the moral significance of such ideals. If, on the other hand, he were impressed with the scientific character of such investigations, he would come to his conclusion about the moral significance of such ideals on the basis of what he regards as "scientific" evidence.

If, for instance, a person were to believe that overpopulation is a serious problem of the near future, and if he were impressed with the statistical studies of population increases, he would discount the moral soundness of the notion that procreating is a "moral" duty for every person. He would, furthermore, discount as unrealistic, and even as false, the notion which is, nevertheless, persistently affirmed, that "the bearing of children is the sole justification for marriage." The fact itself that this notion "no longer governs practice" must thus be investigated by anyone who is seriously interested in human well-being, in order to ascertain why it is not respected as a sound ideal.[3] If people do not respect it as a sound ideal, because it is not a sound directive for achieving the maximum benefits of marriage, then we should want to know this. Whatever affects the quality of human life, and so the character of people, is morally significant; and it is with such facts that we are concerned. We are interested in knowing, for instance, why a particular moral philosopher should affirm that "The ideal engagement *is* a period of sexual restraint and postponement."[4] We are interested in ascertaining the factual soundness of this ideal, and in ascertaining this, we may be helped by knowing the investigations of psychologists, sociologists, and physiologists. We are interested in finding out if this ideal actually *is* correlated with a type of marriage whose quality justifies this type of engagement. We also believe that if any type of premarital relation is to be *morally* justified, it must be on the basis of its effectiveness for contributing to the enrichment of a span of life which includes more than merely the period of courtship; and this effectiveness, or lack of it, can be investigated. If it is the case that statistical studies point out a correlation between premarital intercourse, and distrust, doubt, and uncertainty in marriage, then there is empirical evidence that the ideal of premarital sexual restraint is not unsound, but is a dependable directive for those who seriously want to enter into marriage with as few avoidable handicaps as possible. The studies which were made by Terman, for instance, indicate that there actually is a correlation between happiness in marriage and sexual restraint before marriage; and that there is a correlation between discontent in marriage and "promiscuity" before marriage.[5]

4. *An empirical moral philosophy takes account of what men believe is morally right*

We cannot begin from scratch in formulating a moral philosophy, any more than we can do so in developing a physical science. In knowing what others regard as morally sound, we have the benefit of others' reflecting on moral problems. In taking account of this aspect of morally serious reflecting, however, we are faced with a problem: A knowledge of what men *believe* is right is not necessarily a knowledge of what *is* right; and yet, a knowledge of what men regard as right does at least provide us with a content about which we may reflect in endeavoring to ascertain what *is* right. And what is more, this content may well include materials out of which we may formulate a reflected-upon set of ideals which would justify our serious acceptance.

Learning what other people believe is right is an empirical method which Socrates, for instance, employed in formulating his own moral philosophy. In speaking with Cephalus, for example, he declared: "I enjoy talking with the very aged. We have to learn of them as it were from wayfarers who have preceded us on a road."[6] In understanding what others have learned about living, we enlarge the scope of our own lives. What men have believed is right is one aspect of human history; and a knowledge of this is an acquaintance with a digest of morally serious reflecting. Every principle which has been codified as a moral law or commandment is a digest of the morally serious reflecting of entire cultures. Codifying or formulating such principles is obviously not the work of great numbers. It may be the work of few. The Deuteronomic code, as preserved in the Old Testament, for example, is the work of a priestly class.

Yet, the moral principles in this code are schemes of living with which many other than priests were acquainted. They express the wisdom gained in the course of centuries of human living.

Even utopias, such as Plato's *Republic*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and Bacon's *Atlantis*, are not entirely products of the genius of individual men, but reveal much which many people have learned. In knowing the history of utopias, we, therefore, know more than the moral idealisms of a few philosophers. We know rather what some philosophers have selected from their cultures as morally significant. In reflecting on what such philosophers have affirmed as ideals, we thus have the benefit both of philosophers' reflecting, and also of the experiments in living about which they reflect.

Lecky's *History of European Morals* and Breasted's *The Dawn of Conscience* likewise enable us to comprehend something of the idealism of mankind. Such idealism, of course, is only one aspect of human history; and it is, unfortunately, not entirely a record of what men have done, but rather of what they have acknowledged ought to be done. In other words, it is a record of morally serious reflecting on ways of living which men respected, even though they did not always conform to them.

This disparity between what men affirm as ideals and what they do is another fact of which we must take account in an empirical moral philosophy. We would indeed have a superficial understanding of human life if we were to reconstruct human history on the basis of a history of moral ideals, since moral ideals constitute only one aspect of human life. What men believe can be done for the enrichment of life is one thing; and what men do to achieve such enrichment is often very different. This disparity itself between what men recognize as capable of enriching life, and what they do to enrich life, is a fact about which we must reflect if we want to understand what accounts for this fact. Just why there is this disparity between what men recognize as worth doing, and what they do, is a grave moral problem, which is peculiar only to empirical moral philosophies. It would not even arise in a strictly analytical moral philosophy, because the concern in such a philosophy is understanding what is implied in an ideal.

In an empirical moral philosophy, on the other hand, we are interested both in knowing what men do with ideals, and also what they can do with them, because this knowledge helps us to evaluate the moral worth of ideals. The disparity between an ideal and men's acting may be a commentary on the unsoundness of an ideal rather than on the folly of men for not conforming to it. Hence, when we know of the fact of a disparity between an affirmed ideal and practice, we are interested in evaluating the disparity. That is, we want to know if men's failure to conform to an ideal is a mark of men's honesty in recognizing that an ideal is not a sound directive for achieving a quality of life which is worth achieving, or whether their failure to conform to an ideal is a mark of their own moral deficiency.

The rate of divorce in our country, for example, is approaching one to three; and in some cities, "the number of divorces granted is almost equal to the number of marriage licenses issued." [7] Anyone who seriously takes account of this fact alone cannot help but be troubled about the disparity between ideals which are affirmed in our culture and a widespread practice in our culture. If an ideal is not worth respecting, it should not be given lip service as if it were worthy of respect. If practice, on the other hand, is more enlightened than ideals, then ideals should be brought up to the level of practice. Yet, one of the problems which confronts a person who reflects about this disparity between ideals and practice is ascertaining whether it is practice or ideals which ought to be altered.

We may all agree that a discrepancy between an affirmed ideal and practice is morally undesirable; and yet, we must consider what specifically accounts for such a discrepancy. It is not enough merely to be aware that our affirmed ideals are one thing, and the pattern of our acting is another. We want to know if our ideals are too impotent to integrate our lives, or whether our ideals are sound directives, and it is we ourselves who do less than we can to conform to them.

Doing less than we can, is one thing. Doing all that we can, and yet falling short of unsound ideals is something very different. In the first case, *we* are morally deficient. In the second case, our ideals are morally censorable, because they themselves help to bring about hypocrisy, when apart from them we might be integrated without an element of hypocrisy.

Ideals are morally unsound if they are not means which enable us to achieve the fullest development of our capacities for enriched living. Any ideals which are handicaps to enriched living should be rejected; and they should not be publicly affirmed, but privately rejected, because this hypocrisy introduces a type of acting into our lives which is not confined merely to discrediting ideals. It irradiates throughout our lives until we treat all ideals as occasions for hypocrisy; and when this takes place, we are so handicapped by our hypocrisy that we are not even honest enough to recognize ideals which *are* worthy of respect.

One type of morally serious disunification is a disparity between a person's practice and an ideal which he earnestly affirms. No person can earnestly respect an ideal, and fall short of its requirements in his acting, without also being discouraged, and without even suffering remorse. Some remorse may, of course, be morally helpful; but some remorse is not morally helpful, and it may even be a grave impairment of well-being when it introduces a sense of failure into a person's life. Trying to integrate life on a level which is beyond a person's capacities is a tragic mistake, since it may bring about a disunification in his life which is pathological.

We must seriously take account of the disparity between affirmed ideals and practice when we want to ascertain what is responsible for such a disparity; and this cannot be done merely by reflecting. It can be done only by taking account of men's capacities; and an inventory of such capacities is not within the scope of reflecting alone. Many American schools, for instance, have been organized on the basis of a Victorian practice of separating boys and girls; and insofar as the lives of people are affected by the methods of their schooling, this Victorian practice is morally significant. Yet, its actual moral significance is something which a moral philosopher cannot himself competently ascertain. It can in part be ascertained by educators who are acquainted with what takes place in the lives of students under conditions entailed in such a system of education; and it can also be ascertained in part by psychologists and psychiatrists who take account of the effects of such a system of education upon students' social adjustments outside of school.

Ideals may be sound even though their application may be ineffective. In reflecting, therefore, about the moral significance of ideals, we must take account both of ideals and also of practice. Some ideals are "out of touch with reality." This classification, in fact, is such a common generalization that it has become a cliché which we use without any serious reflecting; but when we seriously reflect about a disparity between practice and ideals, we raise a question whether it is the case that ideals are "out of touch with reality," or whether practice is inadequate to achieve a morally desirable type of life.

5. *The moral rightness of what men believe is right is an empirical problem*

Many parents are devoted to their children, and do for them what they believe will contribute to their well-being. Yet, the devotion of parents to their children does not prevent parents from doing what often is a handicap to their children. According to the criterion of health, as conceived by present-day physicians, vaccination is a method for securing one aspect of well-being, since it is a means to prevent certain types of illness; and yet, there are parents who refuse to have their children vaccinated. We are, therefore, confronted with the moral problem of whose rights ought to be respected—the rights of children to every known method for securing and preserving health, or the rights of parents to do what they *believe* is most beneficial for their children. Most of us would agree that a physician's judgment about what is effective for securing health should take precedence to an untrained parent's notion about what is beneficial for his children's health; and we believe this on the basis of an empirical criterion. Vaccination, for instance, actually does prevent types of illness; and it is in light of this fact that we believe a physician has a moral right to decide in some matters which regard children's health, even though his decision goes counter to the scruples of parents.

We believe that children should be given every possible means of help for achieving their well-being, and for this reason, we believe that children should not be permitted to see any and every motion picture. Many parents, as well as many educators, believe that certain types of motion pictures are unqualifiedly detrimental, because they create desires in children which cannot possibly be fulfilled within the range of admissible methods. Yet, psychologists consider not only the stimulating aspect of such entertainment, but also its function in sublimating desires. In evaluating the soundness of these conflicting points of view about what is beneficial and about what is detrimental for children, we are thus faced with specific problems which cannot be resolved merely in terms of moral ideals. We may agree that entertainment is morally beneficial for a child if it actually does sublimate desires in ways which contribute to his mental well-being; and yet, we are not agreed on which particular types of entertainment actually do this for a child. This, in fact, is a problem which can be resolved only by means of careful investigation; and such investigations obviously cannot be conducted within the province of a moral philosophy, but must be conducted by trained psychologists and psychiatrists.

We know that certain types of entertainment for children are censored; and we may approve the principle of censoring, even when we wonder which censoring actually is a help for children. We must protect children before they are capable of doing so themselves; but we are often perplexed how this can be done in ways which actually are beneficial for children. We know, as Plato teaches, that children are confronted with a moral peril when they are open to uncensored impressions; and yet, none of us would want a child, in whose moral development we are interested, to be subjected to puritanical censorship, much of which we have come to distrust. We are not even disturbed about the principle of censorship, but we are disturbed about its application. The principle of censorship as such is, of course, merely a scheme; and until it is put into practice, it is morally innocuous. It neither helps nor hinders anyone. But what specifically can help children, without hindering them, is a problem which cannot entirely be answered in principle and in theory. Principles and theories must themselves be tested for their moral soundness; and the means for such testing is empirical. Entertainment for children which induces anxiety, which in turn leads to insecurity and instability, is a moral handicap; and it is a handicap according to a criterion with which every psychologist is acquainted. What induces anxiety, however, would not be looked upon as morally detrimental if anxiety itself were not looked upon as adverse to well-being. Hence, only as psychologists regard anxiety as an undesirable type of experience do they look upon entertainment which induces it as undesirable; and only as they look upon frustration as an impairment of mental health, do they regard whatever contributes to it as morally detrimental.

Whatever we regard as detrimental to well-being, such as frustration, thus becomes a criterion by which we make moral evaluations. We cannot, however, ascertain the moral *soundness* of any criterion by means of the criterion itself. Frustration, for instance, which is commonly condemned as detrimental, may actually be helpful in a person's development, since we know of frustrations from which we wished we were free at the time we have them, but toward which we have a very different attitude when we look in retrospect. We likewise know of many persons whom we classify as "frustrated," who are our great poets and writers. Although we should not wish upon them the frustrations from which they suffer, yet, in light of what they achieve in the enrichment of our literature, we do not regard their frustrations as a "handicap" to human life. Although we may agree that whatever negates life, constitutes a moral problem, we do not also admit that negating particular aspects of life is a handicap to the type of achievement which we ourselves often most earnestly desire. We know that we must give up in order to achieve what is most worth achieving, even though some privations and denials often become clarified as morally beneficial only in retrospect. When, for instance, we think about a sense of failure, and even a sense of guilt, which are often entailed in conscientious living, we are aware that without a capacity for such experience, men would not even have a capacity to recognize some of their gravest responsibilities. Which particular instances of a sense of guilt, however, are handicaps to the development of a morally sensitive life, and which are instrumental to such development, is, therefore, a disturbing problem; and no one of us surely would presume that he could resolve this particular problem merely by reflecting, since it is impossible to know in all cases what effect such an experience may have upon the development of a person. We may be rather confident about what is *likely* to be the case "in the long run," or as "a general rule," but what the moral significance of such an experience actually will be in the development of particular individuals is something which cannot always even be predicted.

An ideal which is consistent conforms to a logical criterion; although in conforming to this logical requirement, it fulfills only the minimum requirement of a *moral* ideal. "Think of yourself first," for example, is an internally consistent ideal, and so conforms to the minimum logical requirement of moral ideals. In this respect, it differs in no way from the ideal, "Love your neighbor." The *moral* significance of these two ideals, however, is as wide apart as the poles. These ideals diverge in moral significance, not because they differ in logical consistency, but because they perform morally different roles in human life which are measured by a standard other than logic. This standard is the effectiveness of an ideal for ordering the complex components of human life into a richly ordered life.

In trying to include in our lives more than we can integrate, we, of course, lose an ordered life; and so we lose the character of life to which we refer as "selfhood." "Selfhood" is an ordered form of living; and for achieving it, we must select, as well as reject; and only as we live by the help of an ideal which clarifies our lives, can we select, and also reject in ways which are consistent.

An ideal must be consistent in order to be capable of integrating the many aspects of a person's complex life into an ordered selfhood. Included in such a complex life, for example, are affections for others; and yet, such affections are not recognized in the moral ideal which Kant regards as alone worthy of universal respect. We may agree with Kant that "duty has nothing to do with enjoyment of life"; and yet, we need not agree with him that "it has *its* special law and *its* special tribunal."[8] Duty indeed is a matter neither of affection nor of enjoyment; and yet, there is no "special tribunal" or criterion by which duty alone must be respected as worthy of moral approval. The criterion by which we evaluate the moral worthiness of duty is the same criterion by which we evaluate the moral worth of every other aspect of human life. It is its contribution to the enhancement of human life. We, therefore, do not agree with Kant about the unique moral role of duty in human life when he declares that a morally serious person "lives only because it is his duty, not because he finds anything pleasant in life."[9] We desire to live neither "because it is our duty" to live, nor because we seek only enjoyment. We desire to live because we can achieve a quality of life which morally justifies living; and such a quality of life includes morally significant considerations, some of which have been discussed in this book. In fact, all that has been said in analyzing the nature of sound morality accounts for the *moral* reason we have for living; and this reason is not summed up in the ideal of duty. We question, therefore, the moral significance of the abstraction "Duty," because we are never confronted with "Duty," but rather with complex situations in which we must earnestly endeavor to ascertain what our duties are.

What we actually can do for the enrichment of human life in each specific situation in which we live is what we *ought* to do, and this is our moral duty. Some moral philosophers, such as Kant, maintain, on the other hand, that a moral ought or duty specifies what we *can* do; but this type of interpretation ignores the actual moral *criterion* by which we must evaluate our ideals of duty for their moral soundness. An ideal is morally sound only when it confronts us with an ought which we *can* fulfill; and for ascertaining which ideals qualify by this criterion, we need more than reflecting, or more than what Kant calls "pure reason." The very notion of "reason . . . alone determin(ing) . . . conduct," which is maintained by Kant, is morally unsound, because it is not possible for us merely by reflecting to take account of all the factors of which account must be taken in considering what is most contributory to the enrichment of human life.[10] For the clarification of this empirical problem, we must take account of human life in the concrete contexts in which it seeks its enrichment.

What any person can do for the enrichment of human life is *his* moral ought; and clarifying this, is an empirical problem. It is taking account of the resources which are available for his use; and it is likewise taking account of his capacities to use them. These considerations are not matters of logic, and they are not matters merely of reflecting clearly about concepts, which Kant calls "pure reasoning"; but they are problems of reflecting clearly about actual resources for living, and about actual capacities to use such resources.

6. *The moral soundness of ideals is an empirical problem*

The moral soundness of ideals confronts us with one of the most difficult problems which we face in reflecting about morality. Only ideals which can help us to achieve the fullest development of our capacities for living are worthy of our approval; and in order to ascertain which ideals are capable of doing this, we must subject all of our ideals to a searching scrutiny.

We do not hesitate to disparage some ideals as morally trivial, and even as expressions of morbid fanaticism. We may disparage, for instance, an Arabian practice of subjecting men to tests of endurance which measure their qualification for admission to some Arabian fraternities. One such test is enduring thirst; and to make the test a matter of an individual's own choice, water is placed within his reach. If, however, he endures thirst for a specified time, he qualifies for the fraternity, which looks upon this feat as a test of what is worthy of respect. Whether this particular test of endurance actually is a test of what is worthy of respect confronts us with a problem. Although we have no doubt that suffering for some things is justified, we doubt the *moral* significance of this particular application of the principle of enduring suffering. We doubt whether enduring suffering is a morally sound procedure when it is for no purpose other than for demonstrating a person's capacity to endure suffering. We wonder if such a procedure is sadistic, or actually a way of testing the strength of character.

We may likewise doubt the justification for the sacrifice of life which many martyrs have made; and yet, we do not at the same time question the moral soundness of the *way of living* which we classify as "martyrdom." We may well believe that there are causes for which giving up one's life is justified; and yet, we may doubt the justification for particular instances of such sacrifice. We may reject much which has been esteemed as martyrdom for worthy causes; and yet not doubt the moral soundness of a sacrifice of life for a cause which actually contributes to the enrichment of human life.

Here again we are confronted with the difficult problem of distinguishing the moral soundness of a principle from the moral soundness of an interpretation of a principle. We may respect a principle as sound, and at the same time believe that it is misapplied or misinterpreted. We are acquainted with the pathology known as masochism, in which men subject themselves to suffering, not for the sake of a cause, but because it is a way in which they receive satisfaction. The purpose, therefore, for which men sacrifice and suffer makes the difference between moral heroism and pathology.

We admire men who cherish the loyalty of their mate; but we also know of pathological forms in which such cherishing is expressed as enraged jealousy. We know that enraged male chimpanzees kill their mates for infidelity, just as jealous men do. We certainly do not countenance marital infidelity when we classify the inclination to take *revenge* upon another for such infidelity as "animal impulse." In other words, we do not approve of every means by which men presume to defend the principle of "the honor of the home and the integrity of marriage."

Ideals which are most vigorously affirmed are often compensatory; and are, in fact, compensations of a type which we commonly regard as pathological. Some ideals which frequently pass under the gloss of "high" idealism are poorly concealed expressions of very "low" forms of life. We know, for example, of Nietzsche who complained of loneliness and isolation from others whose company he wanted, declaring, nevertheless, the ideal of the "superman," as one who is independent of others. We suspect that Callicles, with whom Socrates debated, was an ancient Nietzsche, who also loudly affirmed the ideal of a superman, and did so to cover up a requirement of which he himself was keenly aware, but too dishonest to acknowledge. We believe that we should "aim high"; and yet, what we do when we try to live according to this ideal may actually be pathological. It may introduce into our lives a dishonesty in living by an unsound projection, which is an escape from life, and not an enrichment of life. Just which ideals actually are pathological "escape mechanisms," and which are beneficial, confronts us, therefore, with a very disturbing problem.

Ideals are indeed one expression of reflecting; and yet, we know that many ideals are not expressions of unbiased reflecting, but are rather expressions of biases which are justified by reflecting. We cannot, for instance, read the Old Testament account of the origin of Canaan, without being aware of a type of reflecting which we recognize as "rationalizing"; and by "rationalizing" we mean "offering 'good' reasons for the bad things we do." The Hebrews suffered from a sense of guilt for exterminating the Canaanite tribes. Their sense of guilt, however, was in some way diminished by their reasoning that what they did was "morally justified." They rationalized their brutality by saying that the Canaanites descended from Ham, one of Noah's sons whom Noah cursed; and rationalizing by means of this myth, they diminished their guilt—at least in their own eyes.

There is no morally honest living without reflecting, but there is much reflecting which is anything but morally honest; and this type of reflecting is a handicap to integrity, which is the minimum condition for sound morality. Our ideals are expressions of our reflecting; and yet, much of our reflecting is restricted to justifying our practice by our ideals. Hence, we must scrutinize our own reflecting; and this confronts us with a difficult task. Much as we are inclined at times to be occupied with morally irrelevant problems as means for ignoring disturbing moral issues, we, nevertheless, must scrutinize this very procedure itself; and only as we recognize this procedure as a dodging of problems which disturb us, are we able to understand how easy it is for us to resort to such a means for evading an honest scrutiny of our lives.

Attacking customs or conventions is, for example, one of the most common dodges to which many people resort today. Conventions are attacked as if they were the only obstacles with which we are handicapped in achieving the good life. This oversimplification of a complex problem, however, is obviously an evasion of a far profounder moral problem. In railing against what is referred to as "the mass" or "the herd," with its customs and conventions, many individuals, whose lives are empty, place blame for such emptiness upon customs which ignore individuality. Such tirades against customs, however, shirk self-analysis, and often are a poorly concealed substitute for a penetrating moral scrutiny of one's own impoverished life. Such tirades appear to be "reasonable" because they are argued; and yet, we know that arguments may be reasoned even though they are not "reasonable," in the sense that the premise for such reasoning is fallacious; and in this specific instance, it is fallacious that conventions necessarily hamstring morally earnest living. Conventions, in fact, constitute a matrix in which each person must achieve his individuality; and so there is nothing incompatible in achieving individuality while at the same time living in a society in which there are codified forms of approved conduct. A basic dishonesty, therefore, is evident in many who are eloquent in railing against conventions, and so-called "social morality," because it is an attempt to use a painless method to dodge the actual cause of their own arid lives. And attacking a society is indeed painless in comparison with ferreting out one's own weaknesses.

Our ideals, and the ideas with which we reflect about them, are, in one way or another, conditioned by the culture in which we live. Our very vocabulary, in fact, is learned in a culture which provides us with the ideals with which we begin to live, and these ideals which are acquired early in life are never entirely superseded, but they persist in one way or another. They may persist in a highly refined form, or they may persist in a most disguised form as the standards against which we protest.

In confining a critique to what is morally vacuous, a critique itself becomes morally vacuous; and this unfortunately is the case with many tirades against so-called "conventional morality." We want something more from those who presume to reflect about morality than tirades against what is *not* worth considering seriously. Enumerating a long list of human mistakes is not helpful for clarifying worth-while objectives. In knowing all about what men do that is not worth doing, we are informed only about one type of fact; but it is not a knowledge of this type of fact which is most helpful for clarifying the scheme of life which would enable us to go beyond such an emptiness in living, and beyond such an impoverishment of content of what makes life good.

In stressing deficiency, we confine our attention to what is not desirable; and in so doing, we lower our sights, as it were, to what is not worth our prolonged attention. We certainly must take account of this, but in confining our attention to what is not worthy of respect, we expend too much of our time in reflecting about what negates the good life. The present-day emphasis on so-called "positive thinking" is, therefore, a sound procedure, although more than procedure is essential for directing us into the enrichment of our lives. We must have clearly thought out ways of living, or ideals, which will help us to achieve lives which are not only "positive," but also profound. Ideals, in turn, are profound which actually are honest inventories of what *can* be accomplished to enrich our lives to the maximum extent of which we are capable. Ideals are profound in the sense that they reach down to a substantial basis in what we are; and also reach out to what we can do to enrich our lives. Our ideals, in other words, must be realistic according to two standards. They must be informed of our capacities and resources; and must also be *patterns of living* which will introduce us into the richest possible well-being.

Chapter IX

THE NATURE OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. *Moral responsibility is acting in a way that will contribute to human well-being*

If a person can do anything to contribute to human well-being, he is morally responsible for doing so. Such responsibility confronts physicians, ministers, teachers, parents, and everyone who is related to someone else, whose life can be beneficially affected by his acting. Ascertaining what specifically is such responsibility is thus a grave moral problem. It is ascertaining what one himself ought to know. This is not analyzing moral responsibility in terms of what a person *believes* he ought to know, or *believes* that he ought to do. Moral responsibility is not a matter of what a person thinks he ought to know, or thinks he ought to do. It is rather what he should do that he can do; and what he should know that he has a capacity and an opportunity to know. A person is morally responsible for finding out what he can learn provided he were to use his capacities, and were to take advantage of all of his opportunities to learn. Since a person's estimate of what he can do, and what he cannot do, changes with his knowledge, his attitude towards what he regards as possible knowledge is itself a matter of his moral responsibility. A person, consequently, does less than he can when he does not know all that he can know, provided that such possible knowledge can contribute to the enrichment of human life. When a person can be more enlightened than he is, provided he were to take advantage of his opportunities to learn, then his failure is a moral failure; and so it is a failure for which he is morally responsible. What a person morally should know is all that he can know *if* he were to use his capacities and the resources which are available to him for learning all that he might know. A person's moral responsibility for knowing, therefore, may be analyzed as knowing all that he can know about his capacities and resources for making a beneficial contribution to the enrichment of human life, both his own, and others', and then for doing all that he can with such capacities and resources for this specifically moral purpose.

A person's awareness of what he can do that is worth doing is an insight into the moral possibilities for his acting. It is "seeing a way" to act that will be beneficial. A person, for instance, may wish that he could help another, but until he discovers a way that he actually can help him, his desire to help is not sufficient for actually helping him. When, however, a person is clearly aware of what he can do to help another, he has a knowledge of a specific way to act; and being aware of such a specific way to help another is a morally significant insight.

Understanding how resources that are within one's control can be used for benefiting someone is opening up moral possibilities for acting; and such an understanding of moral possibilities is a moral discovery. In making such a discovery, a person becomes as it were, to borrow a term from Bergson, a "conqueror."[1] When a person discovers a way to increase well-being, he thereby becomes a conqueror over some obstacles to human well-being. Bergson also speaks of a person who becomes aware of a specific way to bring about benefits to human life as a "moral creator"; and by a "moral creator" he means a person who sees in his "mind's eye a new social atmosphere, an environment in which life would be more worth living . . . a society such that, if men once tried it, they would refuse to go back to the old state of things."[2]

A morally sound insight is "seeing" relations which enable a person effectively to direct his efforts for achieving some benefit for human life. An earnest endeavor to attain such benefits thus defines for a person specific conditions of which he must take account; and being clear about them is having a morally significant insight. It is seeing the relation between a goal of acting and the conditions for achieving it. Seeing a relation, for example, between a medical technique and the restoration to health of a sick person is an insight into the nature of illness in terms of a specialized therapy. Understanding the effectiveness of such a particular technique for bringing about human well-being is an insight into the moral possibilities of a particular science; and becoming aware of the possibilities for such a science is extending the scope of the moral significance of science. Extending the scope of its moral significance, however, depends upon insights into what specifically can be done with particular scientific techniques for benefiting human life. "Seeing into" the fuller possibilities of knowledge for benefiting human life by specific ways of acting is the nature of all moral discovery.

"Insight" is also frequently referred to as "intuition." Both terms refer to experiences in which an individual apprehends relations between a desired objective and conditions for achieving it. Schweitzer, for instance, compares a moral "intuition" with the creative awareness of an artist who sees a specific relation between materials with which he can work and new organizations which he can give to them. "Seeing into" the nature of materials at one's disposal, in terms of what he can do with them to bring a new form into existence for enriching human life, is thus a morally significant discovery; and this general *type* of discovery is the nature of all moral insight.

What a person believes is worth achieving sets limits to what he earnestly endeavors to achieve. A person, of course, does not always achieve what he believes is worth achieving, since there often is a disparity between what he endeavors to achieve and what he actually does achieve. But what a person regards as worth achieving, and so respects as worthy of his earnest efforts, sets limits to what he does. It is in this sense, as Aristotle points out, that "the end appears to each man in a form answering to his character." [3]

Whatever a person earnestly endeavors to accomplish is what he considers to be worth accomplishing; and what he actually accomplishes through such effort is limited to the objectives for which he strives. In this sense, a person's achievements are conditioned by his character, since what a person believes he should do is in part a manifestation of what he has already succeeded in doing; and what he believes his life should be is in part an expression of what he has already become. Thus when Aristotle says that "character must somehow be there already with a kinship to virtue," he stresses a moral condition which is basic to all morally serious effort.[4] The conditioning of a person's acting by his character is a moral determining; and no serious reflecting on morality is possible without acknowledging this. As Aristotle says: "By abstaining, we become temperate; and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain."[5]

The conditioning of a person's life by what he himself does need not be interpreted as an instance of any "metaphysical" determinism. If a person's acting were always *completely* determined by his previous acting, he would never be responsible for changing the manner of his acting. Moral responsibility presupposes that a person can make a difference in his own character by what he himself does. It presupposes, therefore, that a person can create his own character by cultivating interests which condition his acting. Interests which condition a person's acting constitute one aspect of a person's character; and maintaining that this aspect of a person's character expresses itself in a person's acting is compatible with moral responsibility. The conditioning of a person's own acting by his character is implied in the concept of moral responsibility; and such moral determining of acting by antecedent acting may be observed, whereas the basis for a so-called "metaphysical determinism" is not observable. The very possibility for morality, as morality is interpreted in this book, rests, in fact, upon the difference between a *complete* determining of acting by antecedent acting, and a high probability that what a person has done will have a close correlation to what he will subsequently do.

Moral responsibility, as it is commonly interpreted, presupposes a person's ability to control his acting, and such control is inconceivable apart from a conditioning of a person's acting by his character, and a conditioning, in turn, of his character by what he himself does. A basic principle of habit-formation and character-formation alike is that every decision which a person deliberately makes, conditions him to make similar decisions. If a person's acting had no basis in his character, so that it neither facilitates nor hinders his acting, a person could not even be regarded as morally responsible for his acting. It is, however, a commonly accepted *fact* that what a person does, helps to determine what he will do; and that the decisions which he makes, condition decisions which he may subsequently make. It is this morally stern fact which is affirmed in the ancient doctrine of Karma: "Our deeds follow us from afar; and what we have been, makes us what we are." It is also vividly affirmed by Plato: "The life which a person chooses, shall be his destiny."[6]

Moral responsibility implies a person's selecting a *way of living* which he himself acknowledges as worthy of his efforts to conform to it; and such selecting is not a flash-in-a-pan incident, but expresses what a person seriously thinks about, and for which he earnestly plans. A person's capacity to become responsible for what he does is moral freedom; and achieving such freedom takes time and effort. As Professor Bosanquet says, "The really typical choices—those which show human freedom and the true nature of initiative in their fullest—are the . . . choices which occupy years in the making, as when a man chooses his religion, or his profession . . . working . . . till he has found, or nearly found, a self-expression which includes the whole of him."[7]

2. *Moral responsibility is not restricted to intentions*

Although a person readily agrees with Kierkegaard that moral "enthusiasm consists in willing to the utmost limits of one's powers," he cannot also agree that a morally earnest person never "think(s) about the accomplishment." Since a morally earnest person is concerned about the actual enrichment of human life, his own or others', Kierkegaard's analysis is indefensible that "as soon as the will begins to look right and left for results, a person begins to become immoral."[8] A morally earnest person desires to enrich human life; and as such, he is interested not only in having desires or intentions to do so. Kierkegaard's analysis, however, is a critique of the point of view that a morally earnest person is interested in results of acting irrespective of the intention which motivates such acting. Kierkegaard, of course, is not alone in maintaining that intention is the sufficient condition for morally worthy acting. Socrates also maintains this, for instance, when he says that a person who trusts another "in the hope that he will be improved by his company, shows himself to be virtuous even though the object of his affection turns out to be a villain." We must, however, be aware that although such a person's motive for trusting another is worthy, it is, nevertheless, morally ineffective; and so we accept with caution the view of Socrates that "even to fail in an honourable object is honourable," since as morally earnest, we are concerned with *real* benefits, and not only with our intentions for such benefits.[9]

Although the amount of resources which are available to a person for achieving an intended benefit makes no difference in the earnestness of his intention, it certainly does make a difference in what he is able to accomplish when he acts upon his intention. Although a person's intention to do what is beneficial either for himself or for others is not affected by an *unavoidable* failure to accomplish such intended benefits, still, his failure to accomplish benefits which he intends, does make a difference in the actual moral benefits which he brings into being. Actual benefits to human life are the intended end of all morally earnest acting; and so no morally earnest person is preoccupied with the worthiness of his *intending* to do what is beneficial. The moral worthiness of a person's intentions is his concern for *actual* benefits to human life. Hence Abelard's emphasis is one-sided that it is "not the action, but the spirit of the action. It is the intention, not the deed wherein the merit of praise of the doer consists."[10] A person's morally worthy intention is his resolution to *contribute* to human well-being; and this resolution refers beyond itself to what a person desires to *accomplish.* When, however, a person's intention to act worthily is the only feature of his acting which is within his control, then his intention is indeed the only criterion by which the moral worthiness of his acting may be evaluated. But it is safe to say that there are relatively few occasions in which a morally earnest person is so limited in his acting that he accepts responsibility *only* for his intentions.

A person's intentions to do what is beneficial must be informed of a way of acting by means of which such benefits actually can be achieved; and it is this aspect of moral responsibility which Abelard overlooks when he maintains that intention alone is morally significant. We are aware, however, that a person's intention to help another person will, for instance, be ineffective if it is insufficiently informed of the way in which the other person can actually be helped. Whatever benefits actually are achieved by morally earnest efforts are always consequences not only of earnest efforts, but also of enlightened efforts. Earnest as a person, therefore, may be to act worthily, limitations of his intelligence set limits to his achievements. Thus a person's responsibility is not merely for acting upon what he *believes* will contribute to another's well-being; but it includes also informing his beliefs about what will contribute to another's well-being.

A person's knowledge or information about how to act effectively is certainly not a sufficient condition for his morally motivated acting. Yet, it does not follow that such knowledge or information is morally irrelevant, since informed acting is as essential for achieving moral benefits as is the intention itself that such benefits shall be achieved. A person obviously would make no effort to use whatever resources are available to him for human benefits unless he desired to achieve such benefits; and yet, a morally effective use of such resources is not a matter only of a person's intention, but it is also a matter of knowing how to carry out his intention.

What occurs as a consequence of a person's acting which he does not actually intend, may be "involuntary"; but even involuntary acting assumes moral significance for a morally earnest person when he is aware of a disparity between what he does, and what he might have done that would be more beneficial. A person's awareness of the ineffectiveness of his acting for contributing to well-being, is, however, not an estimate of his intention, but it is rather a judgment upon the results of his acting which might have been different had he done differently.

A person's intention to do what is beneficial for someone is not the same as acting upon his intention. Intending to do what will contribute to well-being is a condition for morally earnest acting; and yet, morally earnest acting is actually *doing* what will contribute to well-being. Since intentions often never get beyond the status of wishing, we must distinguish between wishing for well-being, and doing something effective to achieve it.

A person's acting with the intention of achieving a benefit is not simply a "predominance of preference," since only a preference which actually motivates acting can be *morally* effective. "Moral purpose," as Aristotle says, "denotes something *chosen* in preference to other things." [11] And it is this same aspect of morally earnest acting which Abelard emphasizes when he says that "nothing mars the soul except . . . *consent*." [12] It is this same aspect of morally earnest living which Kierkegaard also stresses when he maintains "there is no decisive result" without acting; and so "*acceptance* is precisely the decisive factor." [13]

The criterion, therefore, by which the moral worthiness of intentions is appropriately evaluated is human well-being, or is the benefits to human life which are brought about by morally earnest acting. Hence the materials with which a morally earnest person may carry out his intentions are not the sole basis for appraising the moral worthiness of his intentions, since as Abelard soundly points out, "if property had any bearing upon moral merit . . . the size of a purse would make a man better" and worthier; and, of course, it is morally intolerable to assume that "wealth can confer . . .

dignity on the soul."[14] Yet, the resources with which a person acts to bring about intended benefits do make a difference in the benefits which actually are achieved by his acting. Although a person's inability to increase the resources with which he acts certainly does not diminish the moral worthiness of his acting, still, the benefits which he can achieve through his morally earnest acting are limited by the resources which he *can* use; and, therefore, such resources are not morally inconsequential for a morally earnest person.

Unless a person desires to benefit some other person, the amount of resources which are within his control would obviously make no moral difference to that other person. Yet, when a person has a desire to help another person, the limitations of his resources do make a moral difference, because they make a difference in the actual amount of benefits which he can contribute to the other person. Thus, as Abelard says, although "The external fact that (intended) almshouses are unbuilt" does not lessen the "merit" of a person's intention to do what he can to build them, it, nevertheless, does constitute a disappointment to a morally earnest person that such means for helping needy people are not available to them.

A morally earnest person is not preoccupied with his *desire* to help others. He is concerned rather with *helping* others; and such a concern is morally worthy, although it is not morally effective unless he actually does help others. Hence the actual help which a morally earnest person contributes to others is the criterion by which he himself estimates the moral worth of his own intentions. A morally earnest person's ideal, therefore, is that resources which actually can contribute to the enrichment of human life should be in the possession of morally earnest persons; and this is the ideal which Plato affirms in the *Republic* when he declares that the resources of a community should be used by guardians who are concerned with the welfare of the community. The fact that this ideal is utopian does not, of course, detract from its moral worthiness. A world-wide tragedy is the fact that resources which might be used for human well-being are so frequently not in the control of those who actually use them for such purpose.

3. *Moral responsibility is not confined to thinking*

Although a way of acting may be acknowledged as worthy of respect, it is not always respected. Aristotle compares this difference to "patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do."[15] Morally earnest acting is *doing* what is believed ought to be done because it will contribute to the enrichment of life, or as Aristotle says: "It is *choosing* what is good" which alone makes "men of a certain character, which (they) are not by holding certain opinions."[16]

Aristotle was aware of the fact that "it is not the same people (who) have the best opinions (who also) make the best choices."[17] Plato also was impressed by this discrepancy between intelligence and intelligently informed acting when he pointed out to Protagóras that morally earnest acting involves more than intelligence, or intellectual aptitude. "The Athenians," he says, "are an understanding people," although they do not always give evidence of their intelligence; and he makes the same distinction in the creation myth in the *Protagoras* when he declares that "men have the wisdom necessary to the support of life, (but) political wisdom they do not have." Just how far this myth may be pressed for an understanding of Plato's view about an impossibility of achieving enlightened political order is, of course, a matter of conjecture; but Plato does at least point out that there is a disparity between intelligence as ability, and intelligent living as taking advantage of such ability. He, therefore, criticizes Protagoras for believing that morality is merely an intellectual matter, and that moral training is simply a clarification of ideas.

Reflecting is an essential condition for morally earnest acting; but it is only a condition. It is not itself morally earnest *acting*. Only a philosophical rationalist maintains that *the* essential condition for morally earnest acting is intellectual. Professor Urban, for instance, maintains such a view when he says that "the acknowledgment of value is already the beginning of *willing* it"; and "the acknowledgment of degree of value is already the beginning of the *choosing* of the greater rather than the lesser good."[18]

We may agree that a person's acknowledgment of what is worth doing is an intellectual achievement, and yet not also maintain that this acknowledgment is itself necessarily a *moral* achievement, since it is a moral achievement only when it influences acting. As Bergson says, "Even if our intelligence is won over, we shall never see in it anything but an explanation" unless we desire more than such an explanation.[19] Only when we actually *try* to achieve benefits about which we are intellectually clear is our intelligence *morally* effective. It is not so much what we clearly think that makes a moral difference in our lives, as what we *do* about what we clearly think.

Aristotle criticizes the rationalistic point of view when he says that "If without being ignorant, a man does the things which will make him unjust, he will be unjust voluntarily."[20] In maintaining this, he considers the fact that men act in ways which they themselves clearly recognize they ought not to act; and Aristotle offers an example of this when he points out that an "incontinent man does things which he *thinks* he ought not to do."[21] It is this type of contradiction, however, between what a person may clearly recognize as an ought, and what he actually does, that brings an incontinent person's acting itself within the scope of moral responsibility.

Men sometimes choose what they themselves recognize is detrimental either to themselves or to others. This is a sobering fact; and yet, it must be acknowledged in any reflecting about human life. Rationalistic philosophers, however, attempt to explain away such "irrationality" in "reasonable" men by maintaining that their acting is an instance of *intellectual* confusion, and consequently, can be corrected entirely by intellectual means. Yet, when rationalists fail to acknowledge that such inconsistency is actually a contradiction in *ways of living,* they fail to take account of a sobering aspect of human life to which Professor Royce refers when he says that a person "can through *voluntary* inattention freely choose to forget" what he himself acknowledges as an ought. Professor Royce regards "all sin (as) a free choosing of (this) sort of narrowness . . . so that a present ignorance of what one ought to know occurs"; and it is this *deliberate* narrowing of the field of attention which makes a "reflective" or "intelligent" person's acting less enlightened than he himself is aware that it ought to be.[22] Professor Bosanquet also recognizes this specific type of "irrationality" when he maintains that often "in willing . . . we *know* that we are willing against what is good."[23] Willing against what we clearly recognize as having a right to command our lives constitutes indeed a very sobering aspect of our lives which is not merely an intellectual failure. As Professor Perry insists, it is rather a "moral failure . . . due to an unwillingness to face the facts."[24]

There often is an unwillingness to acknowledge facts which go counter to our unsound notion of what we ourselves are. Our intellectual capacity to consider such data is thus itself biased by our unwillingness to face certain facts. Rationalists, however, do not admit that we *deliberately* refuse to take account of facts. It is this way, for instance, that Spinoza accounts for judgments which are biased by emotions. He maintains that "When a man is a prey to his emotions, he is not his own master." Although this is certainly the case, the issue is not whether emotion is a handicap to reasoning, but it is whether reasoning itself can be an obstacle to our well-being. Even though Spinoza acknowledges that men are "often compelled, while seeing what is better, to follow what is worse," he does not account for such acting as a deficiency in reasoning, but he regards it rather as an obstacle to reasoning, and, therefore, as something other than reasoning. Yet, we are aware that the way a person reflects can itself prevent him from coping with the fact of his own dishonest reflecting. A dishonest person, for instance, is incapable of "reflecting" his way out of his dishonesty, since his dishonesty itself is a moral handicap to his sound reflecting.

Unless a person uses his intelligence to bring about human well-being, his intelligence is no more morally significant than is any other capacity which he may have that is capable of being used beneficially, but is not actually so used. It is in light of this distinction that Aristotle emphasizes the difference between intellectual and moral virtues when he maintains that intellectual virtue includes "philosophical wisdom," which is speculating about issues that do not necessarily relate to practice. Practical wisdom, on the other hand, is the actual effectiveness of intelligence in actual living. The types of "intellectual virtue" of which Aristotle speaks have one feature in common that differentiates them from moral virtue: They do not necessarily include a concern for the worthiness of ends of acting for which intelligence may be used; and yet, differences in the worthiness of ends of acting do constitute differences in the moral worthiness of uses of intelligence. Any evaluation of the moral effectiveness of intelligence in acting must be made by means of a criterion other than intelligence itself; and Aristotle stresses this point when he maintains that "in speaking about a man's character, we do not say that he is wise, or has understanding, but that he is good-tempered or temperate." [25] Aristotle thus distinguishes intelligence as aptitude, from intelligence in practice, when he says that "the intellect itself moves nothing, but only the intellect which aims at an end." [26]

A morally serious person's acknowledgment of his responsibility includes also his awareness that there are time-limits for discharging his responsibility; and it is for this reason that Kierkegaard declares: "Time itself is the task." [27] A person's moral responsibility is doing all that he can with his resources in time to make a beneficial difference which he looks upon as *his* opportunity, and therefore which he respects as his moral responsibility. "Time," of course, has been interpreted in many ways in speculative philosophies; but for morally earnest persons, "time" means that when a matter of moral import is at stake, morally responsible people must act. No matter how naive such an interpretation of time may be, it is, nevertheless, clear that there is no comparable sense of urgency in any purely speculative analysis of time. When time, for instance, is regarded as a form of perception, as it is by Kant, a person is not confronted with an urgent need to act, lest it may be too late for him to act at another time. Thus the moral earnestness itself with which Kierkegaard interprets the nature of time accounts for his disparagement of all speculative philosophies which regard moral issues as *concepts* rather than as *challenges* to act.

4. *Moral responsibility is conforming to morally sound principles*

A moral principle is a pattern of acting which consists of a set of conditions that constitute a *type* of life; and in conforming to such a set of conditions, a person tests the capacity of the principle for enriching human life. Although testing a moral principle is an act, or experience, a moral principle itself is not an act or experience. It is rather a set of conditions to which a quality of experience is correlated when a person acts in accordance with such conditions. In conforming to a moral principle, a person selects from among possible patterns of acting; and the pattern of acting which a morally earnest person selects is preferred for moral reasons. It is preferred because a person believes that it is a means for attaining a quality of life which is worth attaining. A morally earnest preference, therefore, is never regarded by a person himself as "arbitrary," because it is always believed to be most in keeping with the type of life which a person himself most respects.

All morally earnest efforts to enrich human life are human experiences, but the *way of living* by which human life is enriched is not an experience, or a property of experience. Any number of lives may be enriched by conforming to certain moral conditions; and such conditions constitute a *way of living*, or *a type of living*, which Plato would say can be "known but not seen."[28] Plato thus is aware of a disturbing moral problem when he declares: "Until a person is able to define rationally the idea of good, he apprehends only a shadow"; and Plato's awareness of this problem accounts for his persistent interest in clarifying principles by means of which particular practices may be evaluated in order to ascertain their moral worth.[29] Plato was convinced that a person must go beyond particular practices in order to have a directive for living which is both consistent and also morally sound; and so he maintains that a person who tries to live without sound principles is like a man who "goes blinking about . . . first of one opinion, and then of another, and seems to have no intelligence." [30]

We are aware that a person cannot live with an order of intelligence in his life unless he has some intelligent directive; and only when a person conforms to an ordering pattern or principle, does his life "become orderly." [31] Plato furthermore believes that unless a person knows a principle which is worth accepting, all "other knowledge or possession of any kind will profit him nothing." [32] In believing this, Plato thus understands that a desire for such a knowledge itself imposes upon a person a difficult problem, which Plato describes as "a task which is really tremendous," since principles which are worth knowing, can be known only by effort.[33] A person may, of course, be mistaken in what he believes is a sound principle; but mistaken though he may be, he will never make an effort to ascertain which principles are sound unless he is convinced that there are such principles which can be known; and such a conviction is basic to all sustained efforts to acquire a morally enlightened life.

According to Aristotle, one condition for morally worthy acting is *knowing* sound principles. He maintains that "Virtue" is not only acting "in accordance with the right rule," but it is also *knowing* "the right rule." [34] Thus he does not regard all acting which conforms to a rule or principle as morally motivated. He maintains rather that only acting which conforms to a rule which is "present" in individuals as a reflectively accepted directive is morally motivated; and so, according to him, virtue "is not merely the state in accordance with the right rule, but the state that implies the *presence* of the right rule." [35] He argues that the reason animal behavior is not morally evaluated is that animals do not act according to a principle, or "universal judgment," but act only on the basis of "memory of particulars." [36] That is, animals avoid particular types of acting because they are conditioned by particular ways of acting; and such selective activity of animals, according to Aristotle, is not an instance of the use of a general rule or principle for acting. Aristotle, however, believes that a *knowledge* of morally sound ways of acting is an essential condition for morally sound acting, and says, that this is "a common principle and must be assumed." "We must act according to the right rule," or principle.[37] And he asks: "Will not the *knowledge* of it, have a great influence on life? Shall we not like archers, who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right?" [38]

The formal rule or general principle which Aristotle maintains as a condition for morally sound acting is a "mean between extremes." He says: "In all things, the mean is praiseworthy, and the extremes neither praiseworthy nor right, but worthy of blame." [39] According to this analysis, there are two basic features which characterize all morally unsound acting. They are "excess" and "deficiency." [40] "It is possible," says Aristotle, "to fail in many ways . . . while to succeed is possible only in one way." [41] The one moral responsibility, therefore, is "choosing that which is intermediate, not the excess nor the defect"; and so, according to this interpretation, *the* basic moral problem is ascertaining what the mean is in particular activities.[42] Aristotle thus states a problem rather than resolves a problem; and this problem may be stated as a question: "What is the particular mean which is the formal condition for the moral value of particular activities?" Aristotle, of course, is aware that his analysis of the formal character of the mean does not clarify this problem, since he maintains that the mean is "relative to the individual." [43]

We can readily see how little "practical" help we are given by this formal criterion when Aristotle analyzes particular virtues, such as bravery, liberality, and justice. In analyzing the nature of bravery, or of a brave person, for instance, Aristotle says: A man is brave "who faces the right things from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions." [44] And in analyzing the nature of liberality, or a liberal person, he says: "The liberal man, like other virtuous men, will give . . . rightly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time, with all the other qualifications that accompany right giving." [45] He analyzes justice, or just acting, in the same formal manner when he says: "The just is the proportionate; the unjust is what violates the proportion." [46] Hence, it is obvious that Aristotle does not resolve a "practical" problem when he formulates this principle of the mean, since even if we were to admit that the intermediate or mean is a practical criterion, we would still be faced with a problem of deciding which particular actions should conform to this criterion. Aristotle himself acknowledges that this criterion does not apply to all actions when he says: "Not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions, adultery, theft, murder, for all of these and such like things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not excesses or deficiencies of them." [47] In light of Aristotle's enumeration of morally indefensible ways of acting, we must wonder if Aristotle has done anything except list patterns of acting which are commonly regarded as vices. A fundamental question, however, with which we are faced when we reflect on moral problems, is *why* some ways of acting are classified as vices, and whether they are *rightly* so classified. Aristotle does not answer this question; and yet a grave problem with which we are faced is ascertaining when any acting which is not a mean between extremes, is a vice, and when it is not. Aristotle does not answer this, because he does not consider the basic *principle* of moral value. He is so preoccupied with practice that in attempting to formulate a "practical" principle, he loses sight of a *basic* principle for evaluating practices. Schweitzer may very well have overstated Aristotle's failure when he says that Aristotle "brings together materials for a monumental building, and runs up a wooden shack." But Schweitzer does at least point out a very grave defect in Aristotle's moral philosophy when he says that Aristotle "shirks *the problem of the basic principle* of the moral."[48]

The soundness of any moral principle is the invariance of relation between a way of living and an enrichment of human life. What men believe about the soundness of moral principles is not a criterion of the moral soundness of principles; and the tenacity with which men cling to principles, or ways of acting, is likewise not a criterion of the soundness of such principles. A criterion of moral soundness of ways of acting, or principles, is what actually will contribute to the enrichment of human life; and so a morally earnest desire is always for understanding ways of acting which will contribute to the enrichment of human life. A way of acting, or a moral principle, which is capable of contributing to the enrichment of human life has a property which is independent of men's beliefs, and so is independent of men's presumed knowledge of its moral soundness. Knowing, however, which principles are morally sound, and which are not, is a fundamental moral problem; and endeavoring to ascertain this is a primary aspect of moral responsibility.

Every moral principle is a potential authority for human life. "An eye for an eye," for example, is one such potential authority. "Praying for those who persecute you" is another way of living, and so is another potential moral authority.[49] When a person is torn between two such radically opposed ways of acting, or principles, he suffers from a division within his life; and when he actually chooses, he is as divided as if "two souls" of which Goethe speaks, were "lodged within one breast, struggling for undivided reign." But such a division is a person's failure to live according to a consistent pattern, or internally coherent moral authority; and it is not necessarily the basis for a generalization about a radical dualism of "human nature." From the radical opposition between potential authorities for acting, nothing may be inferred about a radical duality of human nature. Although two ways of living, or principles, are radically opposed, a duality of this type is not a duality of "human nature."

Some type of duality is implied in any analysis of morality, although the type of duality which is maintained in such an analysis is a basic issue in a critical moral philosophy. One type of dualism is essential to morality; whereas another type repudiates its possibility. An interpretation of duality, for instance, which maintains that there is a *radical* opposition between two natures in man repudiates the very possibility of the type of morality of which this book is an analysis, because it implies that a person cannot be integrated into a coherent life by his own earnest efforts. Socrates, for instance, proposes such a radical dualistic analysis when he says that human nature is like "the composite creations of ancient mythology . . . in which two or more different natures are said to grow into one."[50]

We may, of course, speak of a "higher" and a "lower" self, as Abelard does; or of the "better self" and "a worse self," as Bradley does, provided we do not construe such duality as a radical opposition in natures *within* one person.[51] Anyone who is aware that one *way of acting* is more worthy than another way of acting is also aware of one type of duality; but the duality of which he is aware is in potential moral authorities, or in possible ways of living to which he may conform in his acting; and such a duality is not a radical opposition in his nature. It is rather an opposition in the possible *uses* to which he can put his capacities for living. One use is correlated with one quality of living, whereas another use is correlated with another quality of living.

Morally earnest living often involves a conflict of desires between a way of acting which a person *accepts* as a moral ought and an intense desire of which he does not approve. A conflict of this type is a disunificaton which is not merely between desires, and it is not merely between ideas of what should be desired. It is rather a division within an individual himself, who, after being clearly aware that one way of acting is worthy of his respect, nevertheless, does what he himself cannot approve.

Even if a morally earnest person were discriminating enough to fulfill only those desires whose satisfaction he could assimilate without discord into an integrated pattern of living, he would still be concerned about the worthiness of his *life.* A person does not always experience satisfactions which he approves when he fulfills particular choices; and his ability to approve his own satisfactions is a fundamental division between his experiences and a type of experience which he regards as worthy of being approved. It is this type of duality which confronts us with the dilemma of getting what we desire, and yet not having what we can approve. After we satisfy particular desires, and evaluate their worthiness to be included in our lives, we often become aware that the satisfaction of such desires has no real value for us. Our inability to approve of our own experiences disrupts the unity of our lives; and such disunification is not a particular dissatisfaction, but is rather a dissatisfied person.

Only a superficial theory maintains that the moral end of human life is a summation of satisfactions in such quantity that pleasures outweigh dissatisfactions, since it is a fact that our approval or disapproval of our acting has no correlation whatever with the number of our particular satisfactions. Our inability to *accept* what we ourselves do impairs our well-being, and it is this type of impairment of well-being to which Plato refers when he speaks of a person who does not have "the approval of his *whole* soul." [52] If it were possible to forget our own experiences, as if they were not our own, we would have no morally serious heartaches, because our mistaken choices would not be morally serious. They would be only momentary errors, and their handicap would be nothing more than a temporary dissatisfaction. But glossing over the fact that we may make choices which we later would give anything to disclaim as *our own,* is disregarding one of the stern realities of human life. Aristotle, therefore, invents no fiction when he says that a person may be "pained because he was pleased, and he could have wished that these things had not been pleasant to him." [53] Repentance is a fact; and dismissing it as momentary discomfort, or even as pathological, is ignoring the stern nature of a person's disapproval of himself when he acknowledges that what he has done must be judged by what he recognizes he *ought* to have done. The notion, therefore, is infantile that there is nothing more urgent in human life than getting what we want when we want it, since after we get what we want, we often are confronted by the tragic fact that we were mistaken in believing that what we wanted is worth wanting, and so is worthy of our wanting it. Our moral sensitivity is this awareness that we have more to achieve in our character than we have already achieved; and it is such a sensitivity to the disparity between our actual lives and the *type* of life we respect that we regard as moral "conscience." Because there is always some such duality of which we, as morally serious persons, are aware, we never come to the conclusion that we have done all that we ought to do; and so have transcended the disparity itself between what we are and what we acknowledge we ought to be.

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